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The Movie Never Marks



King Kong
Celebrating A 70s Icon



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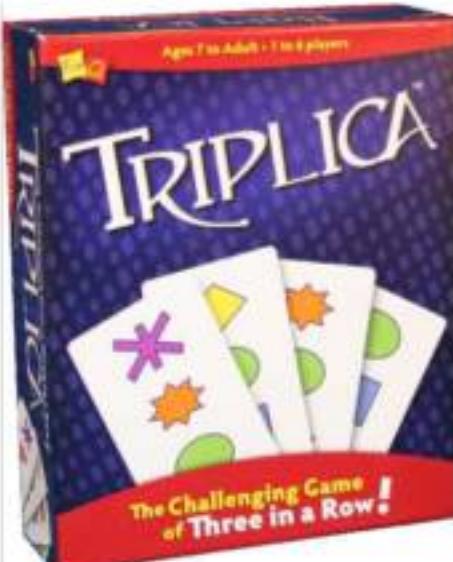


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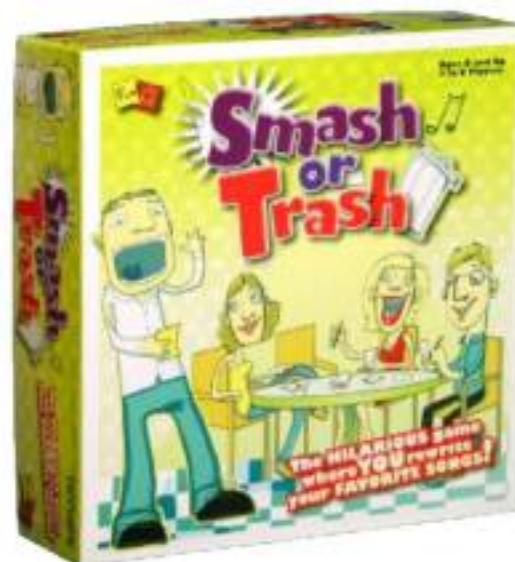


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SCARS



King Kong 1976
Celebrating A 70s Icon

JUNE 2012

Editor

Raymond Dowaliby Jr.

Managing Editor / Copy Editor / Web

Mistress
Fallon Masterson

Web Designer/Operations
Robert Noregian

Graphic Design / Production
Raymond Dowaliby

Writing Contributors

Raymond Dowaliby
Brett Dunford
Scott Essman
Fallon Masterson
John Michlig

Printing
Magcloud.com

Contact SCARS
scars.press@gmail.com

You can contact SCARS via the USPS
by writing to:

SCARS Magazine
P.O. BOX 9001
Warwick, RI 02889

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scars.editor@gmail.com.

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SCARS

Did you ever meet anyone before whose life was saved by "Deep Throat"?

Well, as you may have noticed we took a break. We took the time to recharge and regroup and come to the realization that SCARS is much more to us than just one genre. When we think of SCARS, we think of things that have been left upon us. Things that last.

"Why should we limit ourselves to Horror?" was the question that was asked over and over. We have been influenced by so much more. Art, music, film, people, and events.

The way entertainment is brought to us is changing daily, and new laws are being passed in the night to keep the internet from becoming the hive of scum and villainy that it was meant to be.

As we watch, the world is changing before our eyes, and why not SCARS?

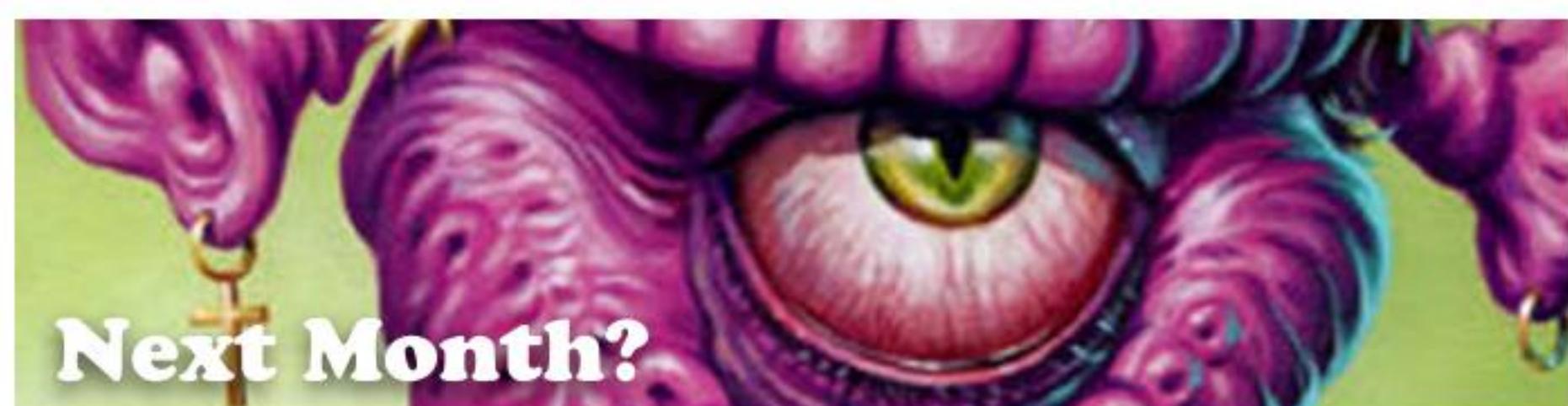
Does this mean we're totally done with horror? No. Does this mean there will be more Justin Bieber in SCARS? No. (Only if he is in a movie with a 300 pound drag queen whose son has sex with chickens. Then, maybe.)

We are opening ourselves up for more, that's all.

This issue, a tribute to King Kong '76, is part of that evolution. My uncle took me to see it when I was eight years old. It's far from the best-reviewed film of all time, and staunch horror fans would generally not place it on a short list of best genre films of the 70s. But a rating average on IMDB won't show you what this movie meant to the 70s. How inescapable, how incredible it was. How Kong was a culture. That's what this issue seeks to celebrate. If I hadn't seen that film, there would be no SCARS magazine.

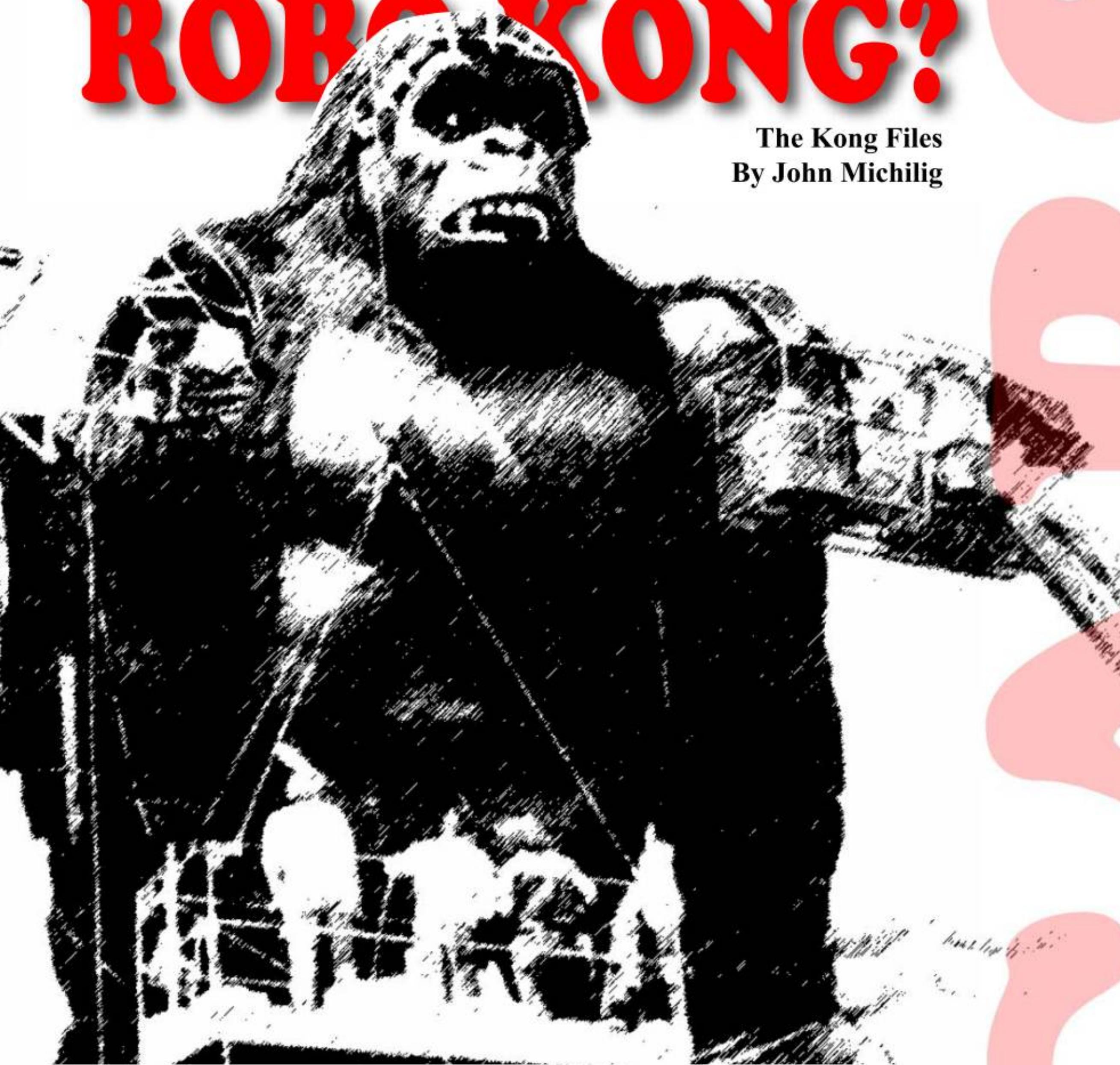
So feel free to let us know how we're doing, make suggestions, and share your scars.

Raymond Dowaliby



WHITHER ROBO-KONG?

The Kong Files
By John Michlig



“Today’s movies tend to have the smell of cost accounting,” Richard Schickel laments. But, after seeing an hour and a half of the ’76 KONG, Schickel reports: “The people who made it weren’t counting pennies and were clearly having fun. Their enthusiasm shines through.”

- Time Magazine Editor’s Note, October 25, 1976

I realize it's not fair to dredge up a passage written in the hoopla-heat-of-the-moment, but I use the statement above to illustrate something many of us have either forgotten or just never realized: Dino De Laurentiis's 1976 remake of KING KONG—like it or hate it—was a BIG DEAL. Richard Schickel is and was no lightweight as a film critic, historian and author, and even he and *Time* magazine were taken in. If such a sober authority was willing to jump on the Kong bandwagon, how did a wide-eyed eleven-year-old like myself stand a chance?

It is perhaps obligatory to open any discussion of the much-derided "Dino" remake of KING KONG (ironic tag for a film without dinosaurs) with some manner of justification and/or rationalization. The purists out there will say that De Laurentiis's production simply doesn't count, that it stands as a bloated 70s-era abomination that has no business being discussed in the company of those who truly appreciate the magic and wonder of what was created back in 1933 at RKO. Dwan? Petrox Explorer? Hippy Jeff Bridges? *Blech.*

As for me, I've already shown my hand. I was an impressionable Monster Kid, and re-promotion for the '76 KING KONG engulfed me. How could any person under driving age who loved the macabre and science fiction *not* be excited about the approach of a new KING KONG movie? I remember standing utterly aghast in my fourth grade classroom at St. Mike's, shocked to see Kong's terrifying face revealed as I unfolded the now-famous Berkey poster tucked into my just-arrived copy of Scholastic's Dynamite magazine. Today, at the entrance to my office, I have a Pakistani KONG poster that features a four foot-high blow-up of that same face—it greets me every morning on my way to the keyboard.

Let's keep in mind the kinds of horror movies that were coming out in the mid-70s. All we had to choose from were either limp "thrillers" that *implied* the presence of a good monster but never delivered, or flicks that no sane parent would let their child see (THE TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE, THE HILLS HAVE EYES, THE EXORCIST, etc.). Outside of THE NIGHT STALKER on TV, (not to mention that creepy Movie of the Week starring Kim Darby called DON'T BE AFRAID

OF THE DARK), we kids were starved for full-on, scientifically-irrational monsters and giant beasts.

Now there's an Italian man all over the TV talking about a giant ape. Dino De Laurentiis says he's gonna bring King Kong into the modern age and send him on a rampage in full color. What could be better? (Well, the 30s-era remake that Universal planned might have been, but that's a different story...). Suddenly, King Kong was everywhere. In the months leading up to the December 1976 release, you couldn't swing an elasmasaurous without knocking over a Kong soft drink cup, Halloween costume, poster, or whiskey bottle. It was during that giddy pre-release period that George Turner's "The Making of King Kong" book got into my prepubescent hands.

And there was a robot. Dino claimed his Kong would be a 40-foot mechanical monster that could stride down Broadway. The media ate this up. "But what's most extraordinary is that he's fully functional," *Saga* magazine reported breathlessly. "Kong's arms move in 16 different positions. He walks and turns at the waist. His eyes and mouth move. And all it took to build and operate the little fellah was \$1.7 million and a team of 20 crack technicians simultaneously operating hair-trigger levers."

I remember seeing ads for Dino's KONG on TV, hushing the room when they appeared. There was one particularly good one where you see Kong bursting through the Wall on Skull Island; "That's a robot!" I'd exclaim to all within earshot. "Can you believe it?"

Fact is, even then I didn't believe it. But I *wanted* to, and it seemed everyone else did as well. And, young as I was, I still recognized the downright goofiness of the following onscreen credit:

The production wishes to acknowledge that King Kong has been designed and engineered by Carlo Rambaldi, constructed by Carlo Rambaldi and Glen Robinson, with special contributions by Rick Baker.

"Special contributions"? Like Mr. Baker was bringing them donuts or something?

The "robot Kong," it turns out, was a particularly shrewd move by De Laurentiis that had nothing to do with movie magic and everything to do with showmanship. In hindsight, we realize that there were two basic reasons for mecha-Kong's existence:

1. Crush the competition: Two studios wanted to do KONG remakes for 1976. Universal announced a 30s-era piece that





would employ stop-motion animation, and Paramount hitched their wagon to De Laurentiis's modern retelling. Both studios proceeded with preproduction while the case went to court. Meanwhile, Dino began talking about his robot, and Universal began to see the writing on the wall even before a judge ruled—De Laurentiis had captured the public's attention with his robot tales, and anything so "mundane" as stop-motion was anticlimactic.

2. If you build it, they will fund: Much of De Laurentiis's financing for KING KONG came from foreign pre-sales of the film—fueled by incessant (and, frankly, downright fraudulent) claims of how amazing his giant mechanical Kong would be.

In the final film, of course, Robo-Kong has basically one appearance and one move—bend wrist, open hand, drop cage fragment. Yet that hydraulic novelty essentially got Paramount's KONG made and

Universal's version deferred until Peter Jackson's 21st century remake.

But none of that hindered the enthusiasm of eleven-year-old me. I saw the movie three times in its opening week, and then saw it again when it came back a few months later for a return engagement. And all along the way I was amassing King Kong Colorforms, posters, magazines, trading cards, painting sets, puzzles, etc. *Famous Monsters of Filmland* featured Kong—old and new—in what seemed like every issue. You could get a Slurpee in a Kong plastic cup at 7-Eleven!

Surrounded by inspiration, I began scratching out my own "novelization" of the original KING KONG—I still hadn't actually seen the '33 film—in a small loose-leaf binder. I knew the basic plot, and I vividly remember being baffled by the conundrum of how to get the giant beast off of Skull Island and back to New York (I wasn't yet aware of the original

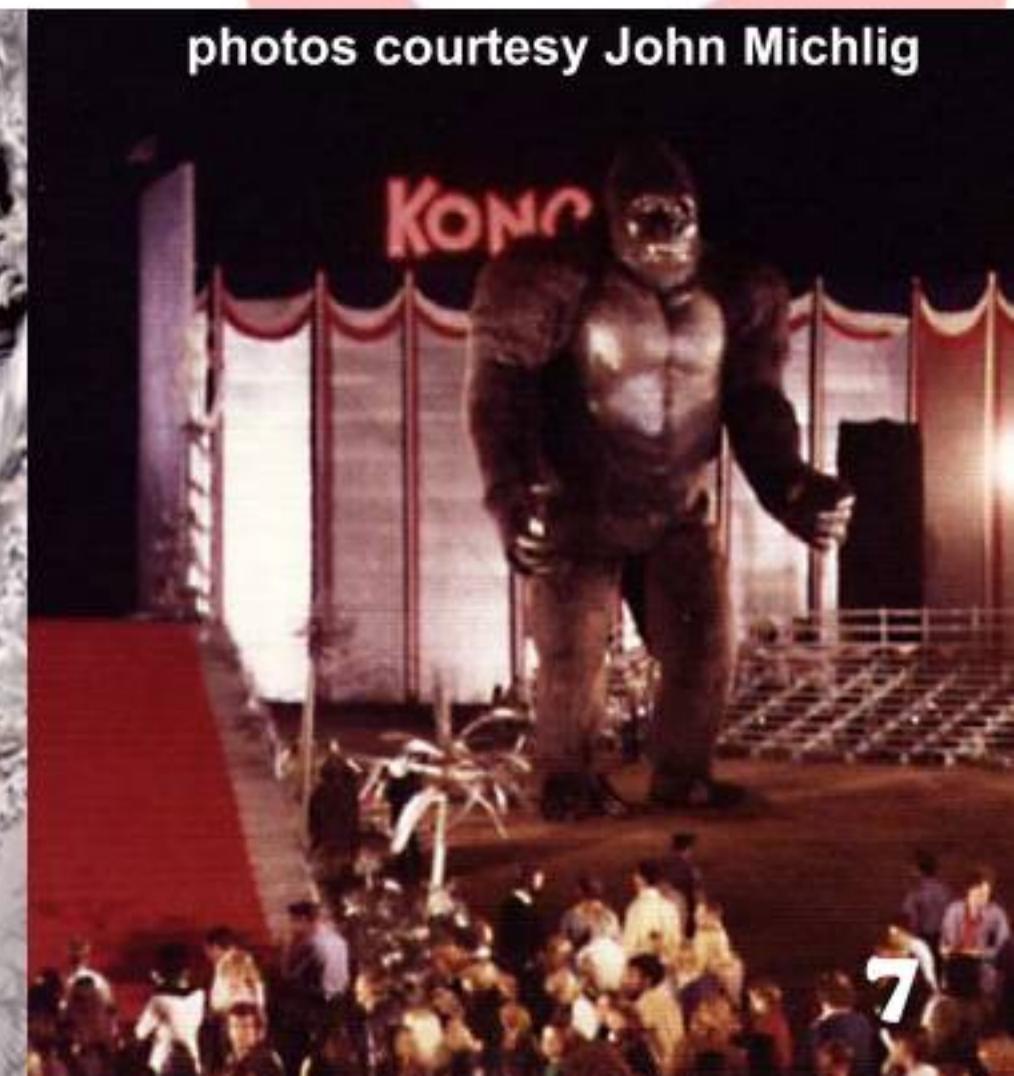
KONG screenwriter's simple approach: "CUT TO NEW YORK, EXTERIOR"). The binder I puzzled over for so many hours is long gone, but my fascination with the process of communicating via words and pictures started then and there.

King Kong: Ferocious last-of-his-kind enigma. Revered god-beast of Skull Island. Film icon. Guidance counselor.

So, yes, there is space allotted in the heart of this Kong fan for the 1976 remake. Like it or hate it, Dino De Laurentiis's KING KONG made quite an impression on those of us who were youngsters at the time. It led us right to the 1933 classic as surely as a sugar-laden chocolate cookie leads to a nutritious glass of milk.

And any movie that introduced us to Jessica Lange can't be all bad, right?

photos courtesy John Michlig



Wait, What's Her Name?

by Fallon Masterson

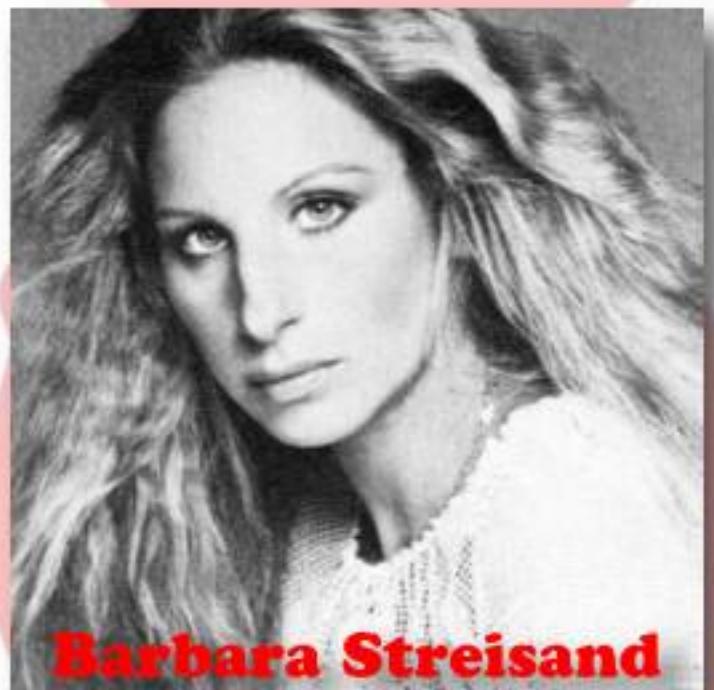
Newcomer Jessica Lange had more than new girl on the block mystique going for her when she first appeared in "King Kong." She also had a character with a name that today would seem best suited for a Brangelina offspring. So what exactly is a Dwan?

Derived from Old English for the word "dawn," the name Dwan literally means "the first appearance of light, daybreak." The name reached peak popularity in the U.S. in 1983, according to Baby-Center.com, where it was the 879th most popular name for females. Back then for every 1,000,000 baby girls born, you could count on 97 of them becoming a Dwan.

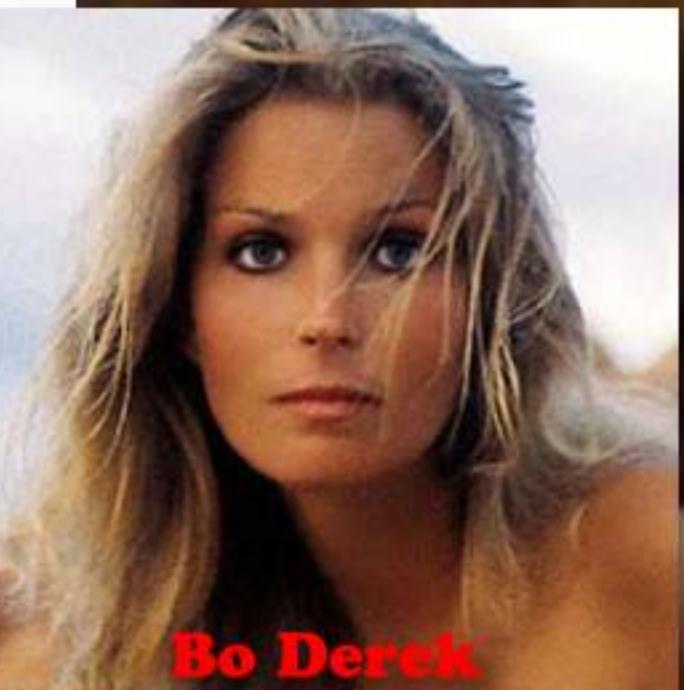
Today that figure is more like 3 Dwans for every one million. But in a post millennial world of children named Pilot Inspektor, Zuma Nesta Rock, and Audio Science (thank you Jason Lee, Gwen Stefani, and Shannyn Sossamon, respectively), who knows. Maybe 2012 will be the comeback of the Dwan.

Dwan Wannabes

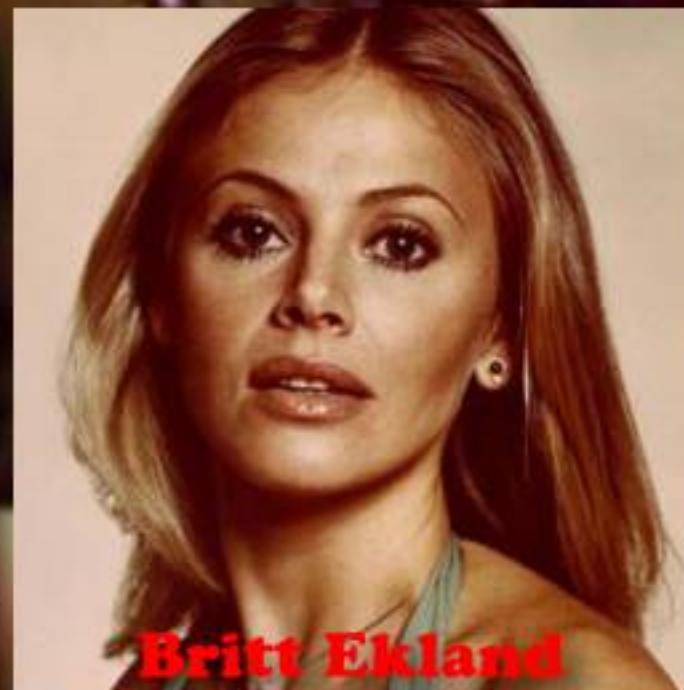
Before Jessica Lange landed the role, several other actresses almost had a chance at being the woman behind the ape. Also under consideration for the role were:



Barbara Streisand



Bo Derek

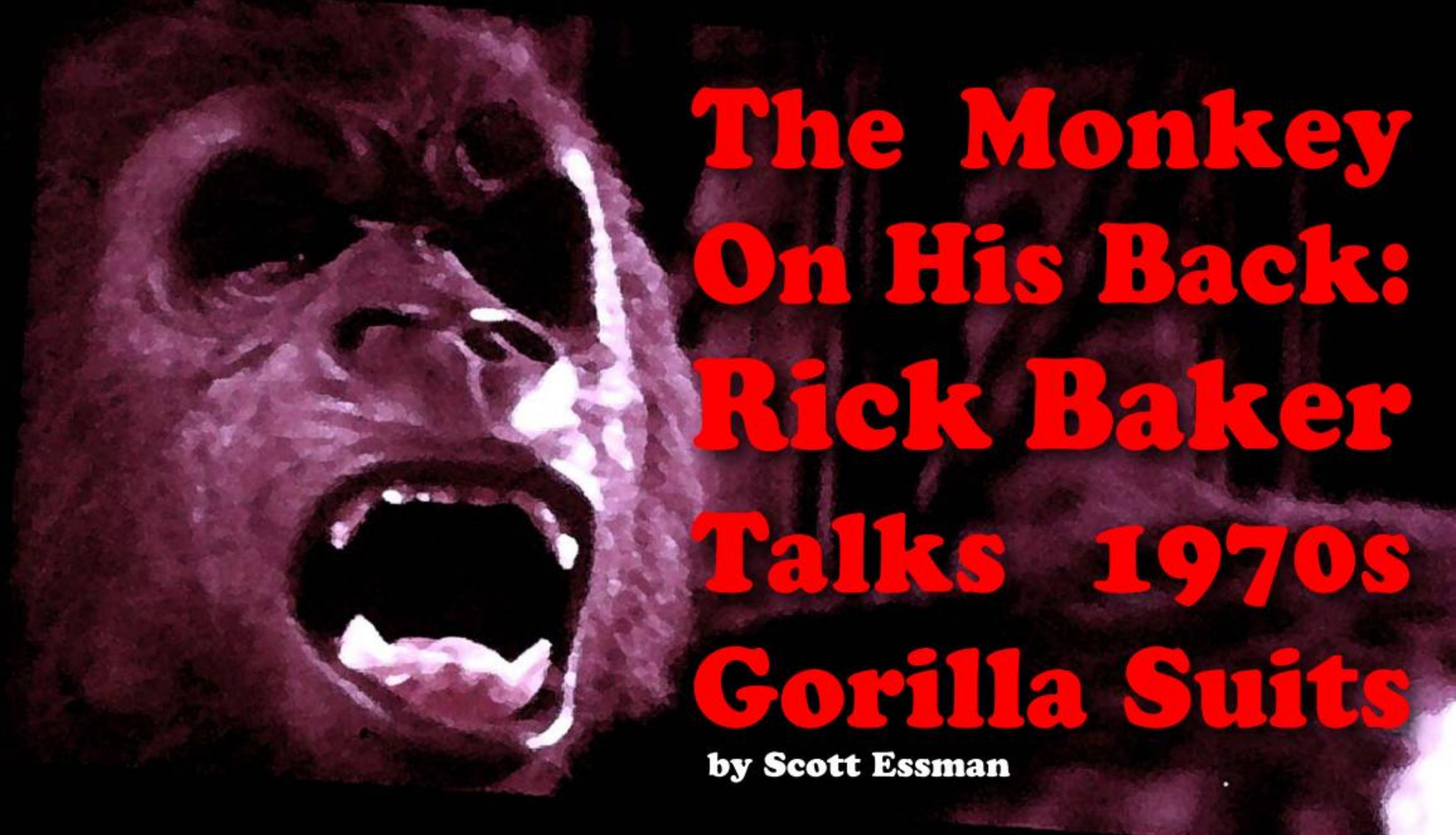


Britt Ekland



Meryl Streep





The Monkey On His Back: Rick Baker Talks 1970s Gorilla Suits

by Scott Essman

In one memorable week in the spring of 1968, an aspiring 17-year-old makeup artist saw the films “2001: A Space Odyssey” and “Planet of the Apes” in a suburban California movie theater. Who was to know that those screenings would change film history over 30 years later? Of course, the boy was future six-time Academy Award-winning makeup legend Rick Baker, and the make-ups he witnessed formed the foundation for the special makeup effects revolution of the 1980s and 1990s. Throughout his entire career, from “Schlock” to “Planet of the Apes,” Rick Baker is known for his amazing gorilla creations. In this rare interview, he reflects on three 1970s gorilla projects – the 1976 version of “King Kong,” the Dino suit for 1977’s “Kentucky Fried Movie,” and the suit he built in 1979 for “The Incredible Shrinking Woman.”

SCARS: In King Kong, you did a series of heads where, as far as I know, this is the first time where we actually saw an animal show emotion on the screen in quite that way. You did five heads for various emotions. Carlo Rambaldi did the mechanics, but you sculpted those heads. Talk about how you developed that.

RICK BAKER: That was an interesting project. It was very frustrating as well. The whole Rambaldi situation... Anyway, John Landis was the first one to tell me about it. He goes, "You know what? There's some idiot's gonna remake King Kong." I said, "And they're probably gonna have some asshole in a gorilla suit." He said, "Yeah, right." And I ended up

being that asshole. All of a sudden my attitude changed when they called up somehow.

Some of them thought that I did gorilla stuff, and they were looking for somebody to do a suit. I went up and talked to them and they had some gorilla head that I'd made for myself, and a little sculpture of a gorilla that I did out of Sculpeee, and some arm extensions that John Berg made, as a matter of fact. When we talked about doing this gorilla suit with these arm extensions, he made these prototype arms that were pretty cool. And I said, "This is how you do it." This is how you do a hand-tied suit. And I was just about to start "Squirm." I said, "You know, if you want

me to do this, I could get out of this other movie. But I need to know now." And it's like, "Well, we don't know yet."

What they wanted--they didn't want a gorilla, they wanted a caveman. And a bunch of sketch artists, really good sketch artists--this guy, Mitch Hubler's a really good artist--drawing this caveman, this like prehistoric man. And I go, "This is Conan! What's wrong with you?" And the whole attitude was really--you know, it was during the time of disaster movies. They hired John Guillermin (as director) because he'd directed Irwin Allen's "Towering Inferno." And that was just some other disaster.

with gorilla. You can't do it." And they didn't want my opinions. And they never called me back right away, so I took "Squirm."

As soon as I took "Squirm," they called back. And I said, "I can't. I can't start." And in the interim, they got (Carlo) Rambaldi, this Italian genius. And I was impressed by his portfolio. I thought he had some really cool stuff. I think he's really talented as well. He definitely had more mechanical experience than I had. And it was the same thing as like the Stan Winston deal: how do two people with completely different ideas on how things should be done work together? And a lot of it was me just being more passive about it and saying okay.

SCARS: Is this when they wanted to



build the 40-foot robotic Kong?

BAKER: Yes, at the time I came along, they said Carlo had convinced them to make a giant robot. And they said, "This guy's a genius! He's gonna build a 40-foot giant robot that's gonna do the whole movie. He's a genius." And he's a liar! You can't do that.

SCARS: Forty feet. Well, they built that thing. And it was in the movie about 18 seconds.

BAKER: 18 frames. Yeah, well, I kept--I didn't know who the hell Dino DeLaurentiis was. And I was still young and thought I knew everything. I go up his office and say, "You know what? You're crazy! You're spending all this money on this fuckin' thing you're never gonna use. And



you're gonna be using me in a gorilla suit. Give me the money to build a decent suit." I said, "You're putting the suit on the back burner, and you're--" They weren't giving us the money it took to do it right. And I wanted to do a hand-tied suit.

"Look, eez-a beautiful." And Dino thought so too. And I said, "But it's got leather on the back of it. It's gonna be hot as hell. It doesn't move. It's gonna weigh like a ton. And the hair's gonna stick straight up when you bend it over these forms that it wasn't made for." "No, no. We'll use the bear hide." It was real... Well...

So we ended up making this bear hide suit that was impossible to move in. And when I first put it over the muscle suit, which was a sculpture that I did, it stuck up like it was this big fuzz ball, so I ended up getting clippers and just clipped it all off. It cut off all the nice looking, shiny guard hairs and just went down to this fuzzy, downy stuff underneath. And then they had to spray streaks and tips in this brown hair spray all over the suit, because that stuff was all like a light, tan color. I mean it was ridiculous the way that suit was put together.

But in spite of that, I actually thought the mechanism was pretty cool that (Rambaldi) did. And what really surprised me was my mechanical knowledge at the time. I mean what I made on my test suit





Photo originally published 1977 American Cinematographer

was a self-contained mechanism, very similar to 2001 Apes. I could control it all myself from inside the head. But it was limited as to what it could do. The idea of actually having a cable running down the suit and moving something--you could get a lot more--you could do more with it, and I thought that was pretty interesting. And I also was amazed at how simple it was. Didn't have to be a mechanical genius to do it, even I could stick on a cable and glue a piece of rubber. So I had learned something about mechanisms from Rambaldi. He learned about foam rubber. He didn't know what foam rubber was to begin with--latex foam. And he learned

about proper mold making, and sculpturing and punching hair, and all that kind of stuff. But it was a disappointing experience. I mean, I really thought it was gonna be my only opportunity to build a realistic gorilla suit.

SCARS: Which turned out to be horribly wrong. But, before you move on, the five heads that you did for the various emotions: talk about how you did those. Did you sculpt five separate heads entirely?

BAKER: I sculpted--originally it was also that whole thing about who's gonna sculpt Kong? What's it gonna be? So we

did the same thing like Jane Pittman. I sculpted some heads. Carlo sculpted a head. I sculpted about three. Carlo sculpted one. The funny thing was it was something else. Again, I can't complain. I learned from Stan and I learned from Carlo as well.

My heads, I sculpted them as if I was doing them for myself, which was without hair, so they could be molded. If they picked my head, we'd just put a mold on it right away. Carlo sculpted more of a design sculpture. He sculpted hair on it. He sculpted eyes on it. I just had where the eyes were closed and had a taper off to the edge where I wanted it to be. And when I saw Carlo's head, I actually thought, "That looks pretty neat. That was really smart to sculpt hair on it. It looks more like a gorilla with hair sculpted on it." Mine was the gorilla minus the hair. I said, "Oh, shit! They're gonna take his head."

But to my surprise, they picked mine. They picked one of mine. Which was a one-day sculpture. Throw the clay on there, stamp texture on it, here it is. So that's the head. Fortunately we know who made 'em and who made a mold right away and they made a master out of that. Made a mold of--flexible mold, so we could do clay press outs. So we did a clay press out, and then I re-sculpted the clay press out. So I didn't have to try to match that same sculpture every time. So from the clay press out, then we sculpted the one that we called the "angry" head, and opened the mouth up and did more of an angry thing. I forgot what the other heads were.

SCARS: A "surprised" head? When he was blowing air on Jessica Lange?

BAKER: Oh, yeah. Hmm.

SCARS: The angry head's my favorite, though. Because that really looks like a pissed off animal. How did you get that? How did you nail that look?

BAKER: Well, I'm ashamed of those Kong sculptures, because they really were done... Each one of them's like a debt. I mean, like now we spend like a month on a sculpture. It was a different time. We tried to make it as good as we could in the time that we had. It's real--that's pretty much formula angry stuff. I mean, it's 45-



degree angles up. And you do things with the brows that go down like this, you know. And it's looking in a mirror, making faces, you know, like, "That's a good one." You know. Today I sculpt angry, maybe they'll look like it.

I mean, if you saw the Kong suit in person, you saw everything. You see it on film as well, even though the DP--whose name escapes me now--Richard--Dick Klein--Dick Klein did an amazing job of shooting the thing and trying to make it look good. 'Cause it was a real piece of crap, that Kong suit. Everywhere you looked there were seams and zippers and Velcro and stuff. But the Dino suit [from "Kentucky Fried Movie"] didn't have that problem.

SCARS: Dino's face, though. It's very expressive.

BAKER: Mmm. It was a self-contained thing, just a... It's a pretty crummy suit.

SCARS: You didn't like it that much. Sidney [from "Incredible Shrinking Woman"] was a huge step up.

BAKER: Yeah. Because I had a budget. I had a couple hundred thousand dollars to make that suit.

SCARS: Was that with Craig Reardon and Mike McCracken?

BAKER: Mike McCracken sculpted hands. Craig did a chest for me, but I ended up re-doing it. I didn't think it was enough. And Craig did a really great pair of feet for that. Really nice detail work.

SCARS: And instead of five heads for Kong, now you had one head that could do all these expressions.

BAKER: There was more than one head for Sidney.

SCARS: There was?

BAKER: Yeah, there was--but there was a cable operated head, and a self-contained head, and then there was a stock head as well. The self-contained head was one that didn't have to be tied down to things with, and a cable operator. 'Cause that's something we never had on Kong that I was really fighting for. 'Cause I was always dragging forty feet of cable around every-



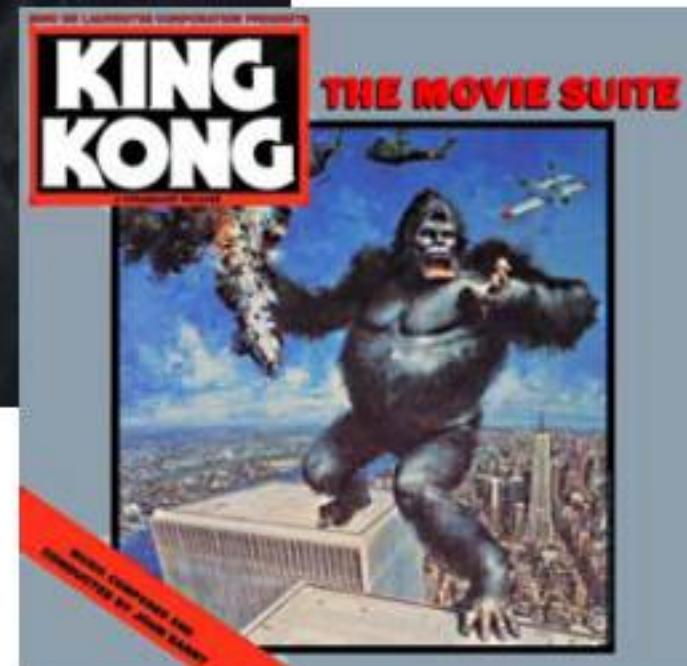
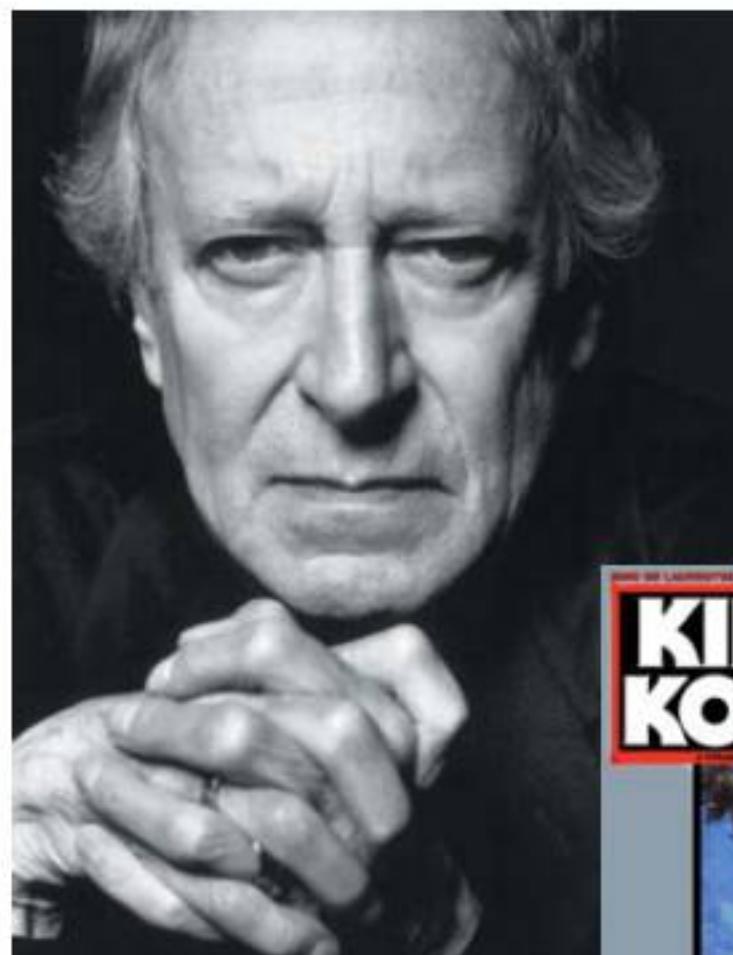
where. But yeah, it was at least a suit that was... I was pretty much left alone to build it the way I wanted to build it. And it was my first hand-tied suit. And it was the closest at the time to a suit that I was happy with.

One thing that I really would have liked Sidney to be, but I didn't think was appropriate for the movie was, I wanted to do a cool silverback. You know, with a nice big crest and all that stuff. But Sidney was supposed be young gorilla, so it was kind of meant to look young. But, yeah, I was pretty happy with Sidney at the time.

Scott Essman has written extensively as a freelancer for various magazines about makeup and visual effects. He can be reached at scottessman@yahoo.com.



The Sounds Of Kong



On January 30, 2011, British composer, John Barry, passed away in his home at the age of 77 at the hands of a heart attack. In the subsequent memorials, and indeed during most of Barry's life, there was much celebration about his accomplishments and scores for such films as "Body Heat," "Midnight Cowboy," "Dances With Wolves," "Out of Africa," a staggering eleven James Bond films, and many more. Yet somewhat absent is mention of John Barry's score for *Kong '76*. For a musical juggernaut as Barry, it can be easy to forget all the films he touched—but for anyone who's seen *Kong '76*, the score is anything but forgettable.

With the unenviable task of following up on Max Steiner's original composition, Barry created a theme focusing less on big drama/popcorn disaster, but instead a large-scale symphonic sound, bringing melancholy, melody, and poignancy to the love story. For Dino DeLaurentiis, Barry's score was a sure coup, and brought a sophistication that elevated the film in the eyes of many critics.

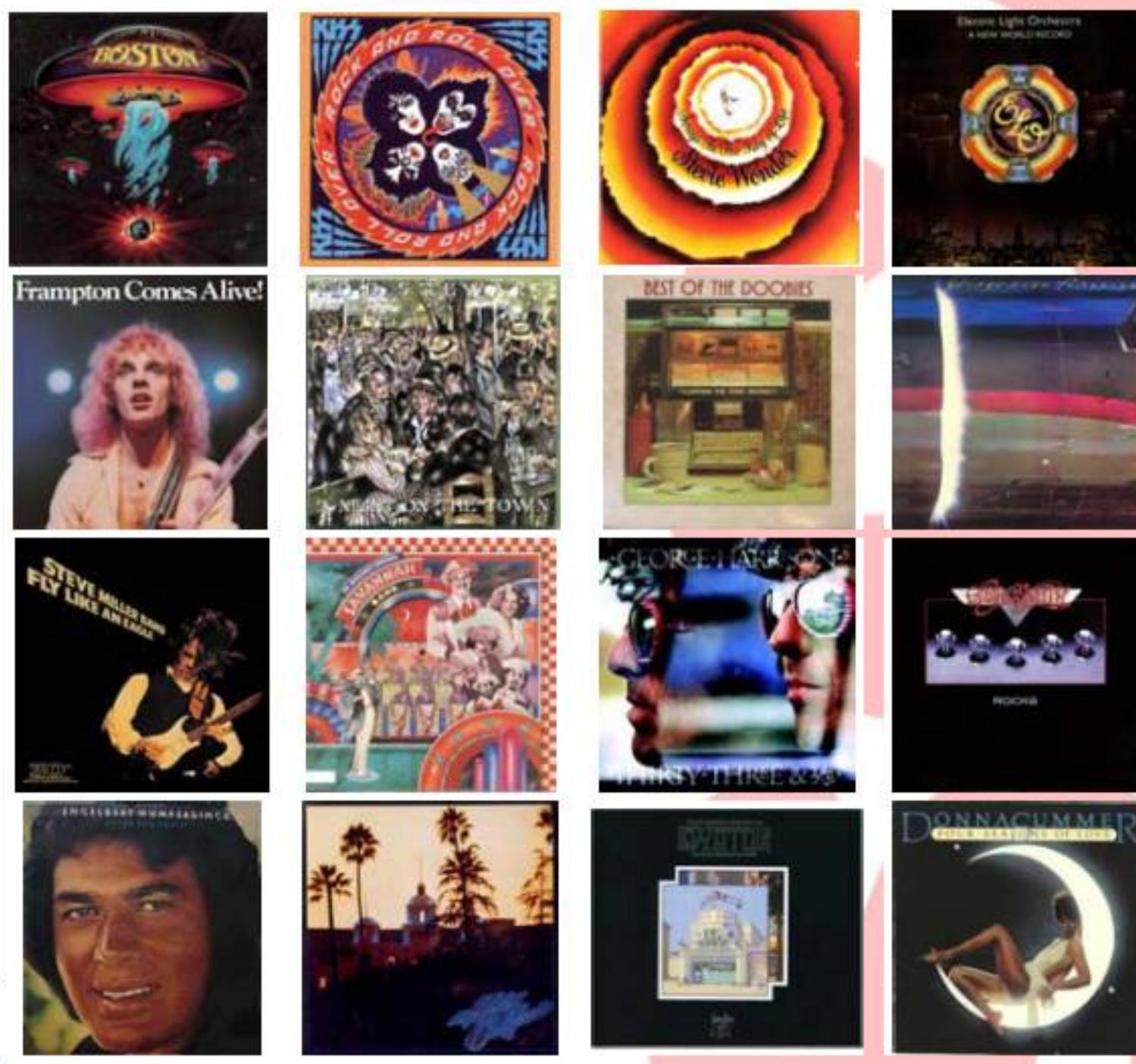
In 2005, the score of *Kong '76* finally had its day, when a renewed interest (spurred by *Kong '05*) led to a reissuing of the soundtrack, created with studio authorization from the master tapes, by Film Score Monthly.

The Sounds Of The 70s

On December 17, 1976, the day of *King Kong*'s release, singles like Aerosmith's "Walk This Way," ABBA's "Dancing Queen," and Queen's "Somebody To Love" dominated the airwaves. It was a season full of artists like Rod Stewart, The Eagles, Donny & Marie Osmond, Elton John, Bee Gees, and many others who—for better or worse—we still hear on the radio today. But what were the albums that reigned alongside Kong that opening weekend as crowds headed to the movie? The meticulous record keeping of WRKO 680 in Boston, MA, has the Top 20 Albums as follows.

Top 20 Albums Chart for December 17, 1976

1. BOSTON (eponymous)
2. ROCK AND ROLL OVER – KISS
3. SONGS IN THE KEY OF LIFE – Stevie Wonder
4. A NEW WORLD RECORD – Electric Light Orchestra
5. FRAMPTON COMES ALIVE – Peter Frampton
6. A NIGHT ON THE TOWN – Rod Stewart
7. THE BEST OF THE DOOBIES – Doobie Brothers
8. WINGS OVER AMERICA – Wings
9. FLY LIKE AN EAGLE – Steve Miller
10. DR BUZZARD'S ORIGINAL SAVANNAH BAND (eponymous)
11. THIRTY THREE & 1/3 – George Harrison
12. ROCKS – Aerosmith
13. AFTER THE LOVIN' – Engelbert Humperdinck
14. HOTEL CALIFORNIA – The Eagles
15. THE SONG REMAINS THE SAME – Led Zeppelin
16. FOUR SEASONS OF LOVE – Donna Summer
17. DESTROYERS – KISS
18. HEJIRA – Joni Mitchell
19. CAR WASH (Original Sound Track)
20. GREATEST HITS – Linda Ronstadt





CUTTING KONG

PIECING TOGETHER THE 70s BIGGEST REMAKE

by Scott Essman

PT. Barnum would have loved Dino De Laurentiis. Having come from Italy, where he produced a celebrated slew of films from the 1940s through the early 1970s, De Laurentiis arrived in the U.S. with much fanfare, promising to produce a slate of “event” pictures in the mid-1970s. He had produced several modest American hits, such as *Death Wish* and *Three Days of the Condor* when he announced a big-budget grand-scale remake of the 1933 classic, *King Kong*. In fact, De Laurentiis promoted his upcoming Paramount film with such flair, a simultaneously competing version rose from the ashes at Universal Studios. After much ado, De Laurentiis was left standing, though ironically Universal retained future remake rights that they entrusted with Peter Jackson. His film was released in December of 2005...the same month as *KK76*.

Undertaking a Kong remake was no small task – both literally and figuratively. De Laurentiis enlisted director John Guillermin, a British veteran of several *Tarzan* films and the then-recent blockbuster *The Towering Inferno*, deeming him capable of handling many of the new Kong’s necessary large-canvas action scenes. Next, screenwriter Lorenzo Semple, Jr. (who had worked with De Laurentiis on *Three Days of the Condor* and would go on to write several other scripts for the producer) was brought into to rewrite the original Kong script, which had been credited to James Ashmore Creelman and Ruth Rose from a story by

Merian C. Cooper and Edgar Wallace. Semple, Jr.’s major changes were to update the story to the 1970s oil crisis — the 1933 movie producer character Carl Denham had morphed into Fred Wilson (unapologetically played by Charles Grodin), a fictitious oil company executive, scouring the globe for new sources of petro-

leum. Intact were the basic themes of removing Kong, a god in his native island land, and placing him in the middle of sprawling urban chaos. In place of the



cinema. It was the producer and director’s intent to build a “100-foot monster” as they boasted, though the eventual Rambaldi creation towered a mere 40-feet.

Perhaps Rambaldi’s masterwork was a metaphor for the film and/or the character himself as creating a fully-articulated 40-foot Kong was wrought with numerous problems. In fact, though the beast appears in the film, his performance is relegated to one scene — when Kong gets free in New York’s Shea Stadium — and a total of five shots in the completed picture. Instead, Rick Baker, performing in a head-to-toe suit of his own fabrication, created 99% of Kong’s performance in the film. For its time, Baker’s Kong was unique in many ways – in the detail of the overall gorilla hands, feet, and body; in the

movement of the gorilla, performed by Baker after years of personal study of primates; and, lastly but most significantly, in the expressiveness of its face, performed with several different mechanical heads, sculpted and realized by Baker and articulated by Rambaldi’s team. Of note, Rambaldi did create the full-size Kong arms



Empire State Building (which had been a brand new icon when ascended by Kong in 1933) were New York’s World Trade Center, which was just as freshly completed when cameras rolled in 1975. Rounding out De Laurentiis’ vision was mechanical characters supervisor Carlo Rambaldi, another veteran of the Italian



and hands utilized in several scenes, and Kong's oversize feet.

Also, a third 30-foot-long immobile version of Kong — created by the props department — appears at the very end of

location with Baker's performance of Kong on a miniature stage. Most of this material was from the opening island scenes where Kong has captured Dwan — played by newcomer Jessica Lange — and

is keeping her captive in his jungle and cliff-top homes. Further shots of the actors against blue screen had to be optically printed onto the shots of Baker in the miniature set, mandating that Winters had to carefully insert that footage so as to make Baker and the miniatures in correct proportion to the life-size footage. As Winters explained in his memoirs,

Though the opening third of the film provides the necessary buildup to Kong's appearance, including scenes with Jeff Bridges' Jack Prescott and Grodin's Wilson, later introducing Lange's Dwan, it is when Kong first arrives onscreen that the film's editorial work shines. First shown as intercut close shots on his eyes as he travels amongst the treetops on his way to capture Dwan, Kong is a beast unlike seen before on film, mostly due to the expressiveness of Baker's mechanized Kong heads. Winters cuts from these first glimpses of Kong back to Dwan, awaiting Kong's appearance at the sacrificial altar, just outside of the massive wall and gate constructed by the island natives.

When Kong finally does appear, a drugged Lange pauses at the immensity of his size just a beat long enough before Kong lets out his predatory roar. She screams and a giant hand picks her up off the altar to be carried away into the forest. The breath-

“It was the producer and director’s intent to build a “100-foot monster” as they boasted, though the eventual Rambaldi creation towered a mere 40-feet”

the film after Kong has crashed to the pavement at the foot of the Twin Towers. Assembling the many elements in King Kong was veteran editor Ralph E. Winters who had cut nearly 60 features (including many Blake Edwards films) when he got the call to edit Kong in December of 1974. 65 years old at the time, De Laurentiis and

Guillermin wanted Winters' experience on the job, as so many disparate aspects of the film had to be fluidly put together. According to Winters, he and De Laurentiis got along fabulously, though the producer demanded to see a sequence on film as soon as it had been cut. Both men had dozens of films behind them, but there was reportedly enormous pressure on the Kong set and in the editing room as De Laurentiis had a lot riding on the success of the film.

Understandably, Winters' greatest challenge on the film was marrying the live-action footage of the actors on stage and

Some Cutting Remarks, “my job was to instruct the lab, so they would know how to line up the two pieces, one to the other, correctly before they duped them together. The action had to be synchronized. The work on this picture was definitely tough and required tremendous concentration. Always challenging.”

Perhaps even more challenging than the marriage of optically printed footage to individual shots of the actors and Baker on the miniature set were the deftly-handled insert shots of Kong's giant mechanical hands holding Lange. These shots are easily detectable, for in the days before computer graphics, any time Kong's hands interact with Lange, they are clearly the oversize hands. However, in one memorable sequence, Kong holds Lange close to his nose — a cleverly inserted blue screen shot of Lange in the oversize hand printed onto a closeup of Baker in the Kong suit and head.

ing room that Winters allows this scene provides Kong with the required raw power and majesty that the character deserves.

Kong's succeeding island scenes include his chasing down of an escaping Lange into a mud puddle. When he recaptures her, a beautifully cut sequence ensues in a waterfall. Blue screen shots of Baker in front of cascading water segue into shots of his dropping Lange into a natural pool and picking her up to dry her off. Winters cuts from upward reaction shots of the different Baker-constructed Kong heads to Kong's point-of-view of Dwan drying off in his palm as he blows his breath on her. A later stripping sequence, based on a similar bit from the original film, allows for similar intercutting of Kong closeups and medium shots of Lange in the giant hands.

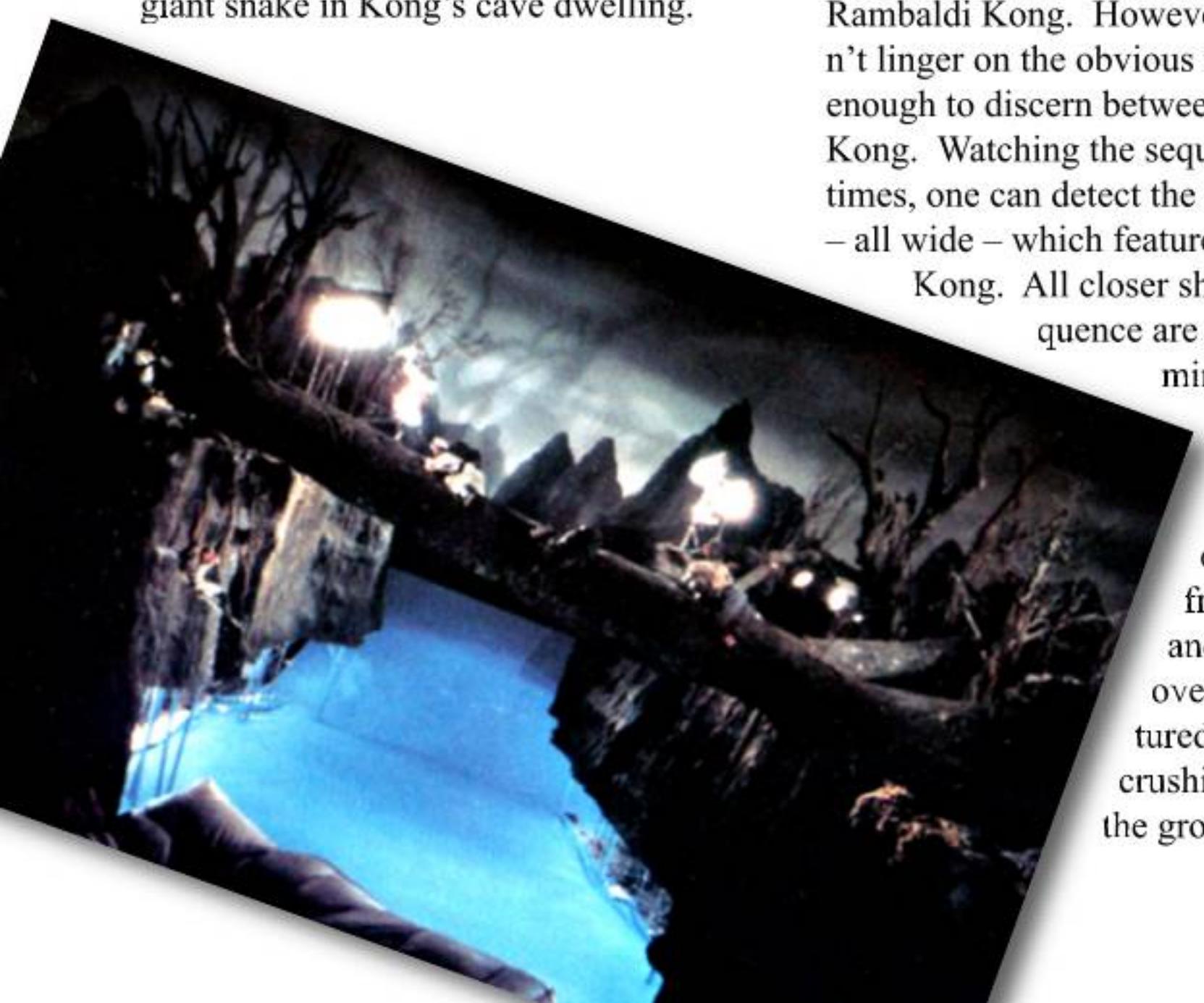
Another breathtaking sequence is the reconstruction of the log-turning interplay between Kong and his American pursuers,



Not due entirely to the editing, the sequence is choppy shot and badly executed as the phoniness of the snake detracts from what otherwise would have been a necessary battle between Kong and another prehistoric creature.

led by Prescott. In a faithful recreation of the original film's similar sequence, Baker manipulates a giant tree limb which has fallen across a crevasse, providing a natural bridge, trying to shake off the rescue party dispatched by Wilson to bring back Dwan. Cut amongst these shots is a scary group of shots of the men desperately hanging onto the twisting log and gradually falling off into the pit below. When Kong shakes all but one attacker off of the log, a frightening scene of Prescott avoiding Kong's insistent hand includes both live-action shots of the giant hand and blue screen shots of Bridges printed into a miniature set.

One of the only failed sequences of Kong on his home island is the attack of the giant snake in Kong's cave dwelling.



When Prescott finally rescues Dwan, the chase to the village and Kong's attack on the great wall take place. This material includes both shots of Baker attacking a miniature wall and seamless shots of the natives and rescuers behind a life-size wall. When Baker finally breaks through to a miniature village and falls into a gas-bombed pit that Wilson had ordered built, it is nearly impossible to tell if Baker has been printed into a life-size set or if the filmmakers placed a giant arm and hand into a life-size pit!

When Kong has been captured, his trip to New York aboard the Petrox Explorer ends with him having a tantrum on the ship, causing Dwan to fall into the cargo hold at the vessel's bottom where he is being kept. This sequence features more blue screen work of Lange printed onto life-size shots of Baker in a miniature hold. In New York, he is set up to serve as a Petrox mascot in a ceremony at Shea Stadium (poorly doubled by a Los Angeles outdoor set), and we get the first view of the 40-foot Rambaldi Kong. However, Winters doesn't linger on the obvious robot long enough to discern between it and Baker's Kong. Watching the sequence several times, one can detect the handful of shots – all wide – which feature the real-size Kong. All closer shots in the sequence are again Baker on a miniature set.

When Kong rampages around the stadium, breaking free of his cage and chains, Kong's oversize foot is featured, especially in crushing Wilson into the ground.

Though it doesn't diminish the quality of the editing, the New York sequences fairly accurately mirror the original film's climax – save one historical difference in the replacement of the World Trade Center instead of the Empire State Building. When Kong scales the building, Winters rotates shots among a combination of Lange on a life-size Kong shoulder, Baker on a miniature set, and opticals from the top of the actual Twin Towers. A majority of the shots atop the Towers include Baker on miniature rooftops (originally, the filmmakers wanted to put Rambaldi's creation atop the buildings but the city of New York rejected the proposal, even though it was not likely to have been technically possible), and life-size shots of helicopters (in place of the 1933 film's famous bi-planes). A haunting optical puts a cascading Baker printed onto a plate of the real towers, but Winters never shows us the final splat onto the concrete below – instead, we hear the thud and next see a closeup of Baker's Kong head in the bloody aftermath. A final montage of shots includes Dwan and Prescott mourning the fallen ape amid a throng of New York City photographers and onlookers.

Upon its 1976 release, Dino De Laurentiis' King Kong received harsh criticisms from an offended press and fan base who had rightly treated the original film as a masterpiece. Nevertheless, the filmmaking community properly heralded Winters' work in the film – in addition to several other key crafts. Though it was not nominated for an Oscar, the editing of King Kong was appreciated by none fewer than De Laurentiis and Guillermin themselves in the future. While the former hired Winters to work on such films as *Orca*, the latter stayed in touch with Winters over the years and decades later praised him for his work on Kong. Winters' storied career continued for an unthinkable 20 additional years – his last film was *Cutthroat Island* in 1995. In February of 2004, Ralph Winters passed away of natural causes at the age of 95.

Scott Essman is a devoted fan of all things King Kong. He can be contacted at scottessman@yahoo.com.

IN SEARCH OF NBC's **King Kong** **more elusive than the Holy Grail**



by Jay Lamantia

If you're a "King Kong" 1976 fan like me, then there's a good chance you know of the extended made-for-TV cut that exists out there. Unfortunately, the only way to obtain a copy of it is through eBay or other online trading groups. Yes, only bootleg VCR 2nd, 3rd, or even 4th generation copies exist as far as I have been able to determine. (With the occasional DVD copy ripped off one of these generation tapes.) Nonetheless, getting a copy is still sort of a "holy grail." I, myself, have one, but am always on the lookout for one in greater condition.

When "King Kong" made its network debut on NBC in '78, the extravaganza was a two night long affair that consumed 4 hours of airtime. The only problem? The theatrical version with a 134 minute running time wasn't nearly long enough to fill the time slot. The solution was to reinstate 45 minutes worth of cut Kong footage back into the final film for its two-part TV premiere. The version also featured several changes to the John Barry Score.

The additional scenes to boost the film's length included the following:

- A lengthy bar scene culminating in Prescott drugging a Petrox crewman.
- Joe and Boan playing cards.
- Jack throwing a crewmember overboard after he catches him spying on Dwan in the shower.
- An extended fight between Kong and the prehistoric snake, with an alternate, less gory version of Kong killing the snake and beating his chest.
- A longer version of Kong breaking through the wall.
- A Petrox executive firing Wilson during the Kong rampage.
- A shot of Wilson's hat left in Kong's footprint after he is crushed.
- Jack and Dwan desperately trying to hotwire a Corvette.
- Kong picking up a passing Cadillac and throwing it into a building.
- An extended cut of Kong attacking the train.
- More footage of Kong hiding from helicopters at the East River waterfront.
- An alternate version of Kong destroying the power station.
- More power struggles at City Hall, where an advisor chastises the official that "standing around" won't get him votes.
- A longer scene of Kong watching Dwan through the bar window.
- Jack stealing a bicycle and chasing down King Kong with it.
- Extra shots of Kong on Wall Street, Dwan in hand.
- A longer cut of Kong climbing the World Trade Center.

Sometimes extended cuts tend to make a movie drag and don't add any real substance, but in this case, I feel the extra footage actually makes the movie better. It has always been my desire to see a Blu-ray release of the extended cut (not just with the footage added in the deleted scenes extras like in the Region 2 French

release), but for some reason Paramount only wishes to release this movie in a bare boned, no frills, crap version. Until the day Paramount decides to wake up and satiate us fanboys, we'll continue to dream of a world where a pure copy exists of this edition. Not just a grainy pan and scan VCR copy, but a lush,

widescreen, complete copy of the NBC, 3 hour and 45 minute TV version. If anyone out there has any clues as to the whereabouts of any existing copy may lie, feel free to email us at scars.editor@gmail.com and tip us off!



Dino DeLaurentiis

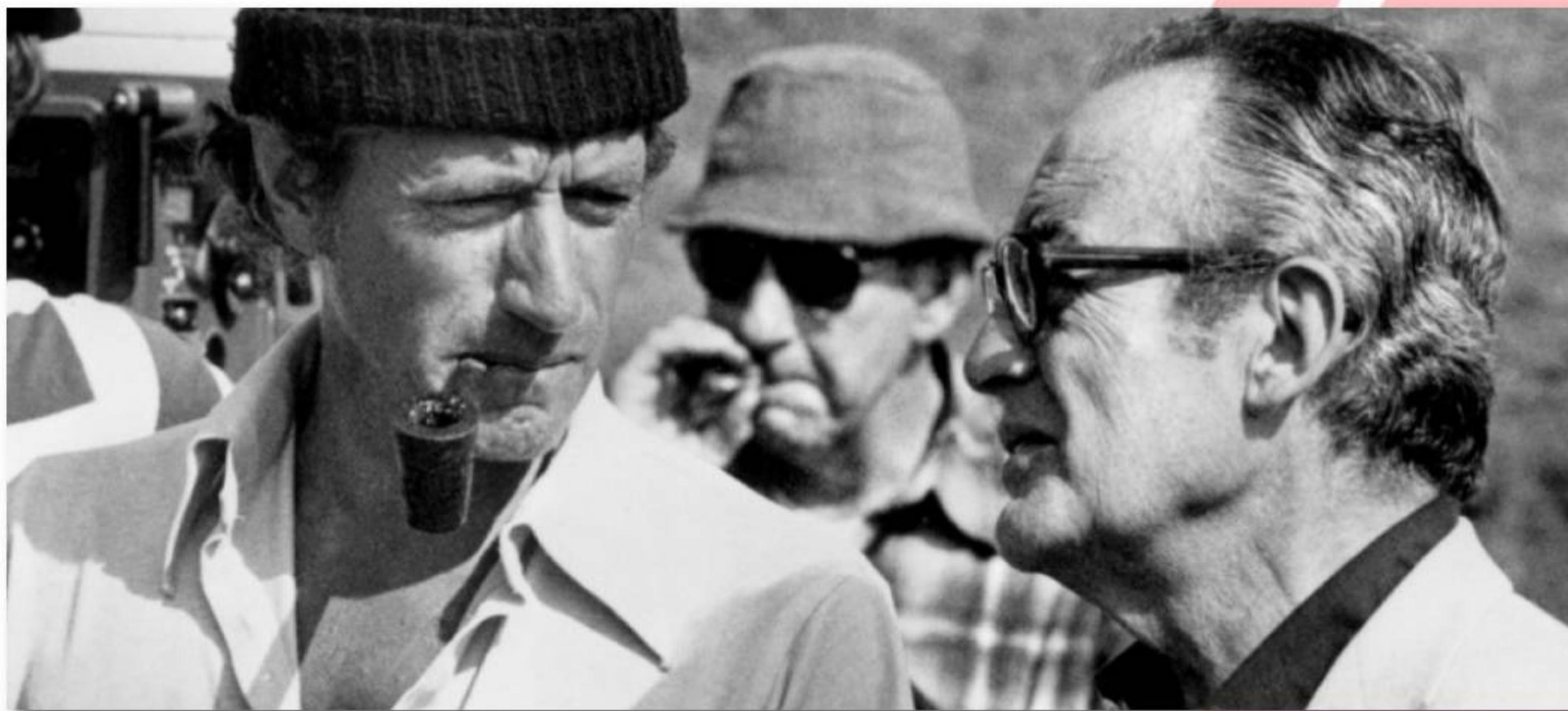
The Man Who Would Be Kong...

by Brett Dunford



“The audience wants to be attracted not by the critics, but by a great story. You must deliver to the audience emotion – and when I say emotion, I mean suspense, drama, love.”

~Dino DeLaurentiis



Agostino “Dino” De Laurentiis was born on August 8th, 1919, in Torre Annunziata, in the province of Naples, Italy. His father, Rosario, was a pasta maker and Dino spent most of his childhood selling family brand spaghetti. A talented chef, he passed down his culinary zeal throughout the De Laurentiis clan – notably to granddaughter Giada, who today has her own show on the Food Network.

Dino had one other passion in life. Cinema. At the age of seventeen, he left home and studied film by enrolling at the Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia. After taking on duties as a minor role actor and props man, he produced his first feature, “Troppo tardi t’ho conosciuta,” at the age of twenty-one. He made his first international breakthrough as producer in Giuseppe De Santis’ 1948 crime thriller “Bitter Rice,” which was nominated for an Academy Award.

For the next three decades, Dino scored hit after hit in his homeland, working with Italian heavyweights such as Carlo Ponti and Frederico Fellini, with whom he shared his first Oscar (Best Foreign Picture) for Fellini’s “La Strada” in 1954. Other notable features include the film adaptation of Leo Tolstoy’s “War and Peace” (1956) with Audrey Hepburn and Henry Fonda, “The Battle of the Bulge” (1965), and science fiction cult classic “Barbarella” (1968).

After producing “Serpico” (1973), “Death Wish” (1974), and “Mandingo” (1975), Dino relocated to the United States. Once established, he made the film that would be his biggest film to that point, that would quite possibly define his career as a producer. The 1976 remake of “King Kong.”

Dino had a staggering budget to work with (\$25 million, an incredible sum for its time), and first offered the director’s chair to Roman Polanski, then Sam Peckinpah, before settling on John Guillermin, who had just scored a hit with the

disaster movie “The Towering Inferno.” Being way before the days of CGI, a forty foot mechanical Kong was constructed at the expense of over one-and-a-half million dollars for just three minutes of screen time. It remains one of the largest movie props ever built.

“King Kong” was a worldwide smash, scooping the Academy Award for Best Special Effects (as well as being nominated for Best Cinematography and Best Sound), but it divided even Dino’s most supportive critics. Ten years later, it was followed by a sequel, “King Kong Lives,” which became a box office flop.

In 1983, two years after the unexpected death of his only son, Frederico, in a plane crash at the young age of twenty-six, Dino formed the De Laurentiis Entertainment Group (DEG).

A run of celluloid bombs did little to make the company a success. Ill-received sequels in the “Halloween” and “Amityville Horror” franchises, and the overwhelming

commercial failure of David Lynch's "Dune" (1984) gave the sixty-five-year-old new fame as "Dino De Horrendous" – a shadow that took him more than a decade to escape.

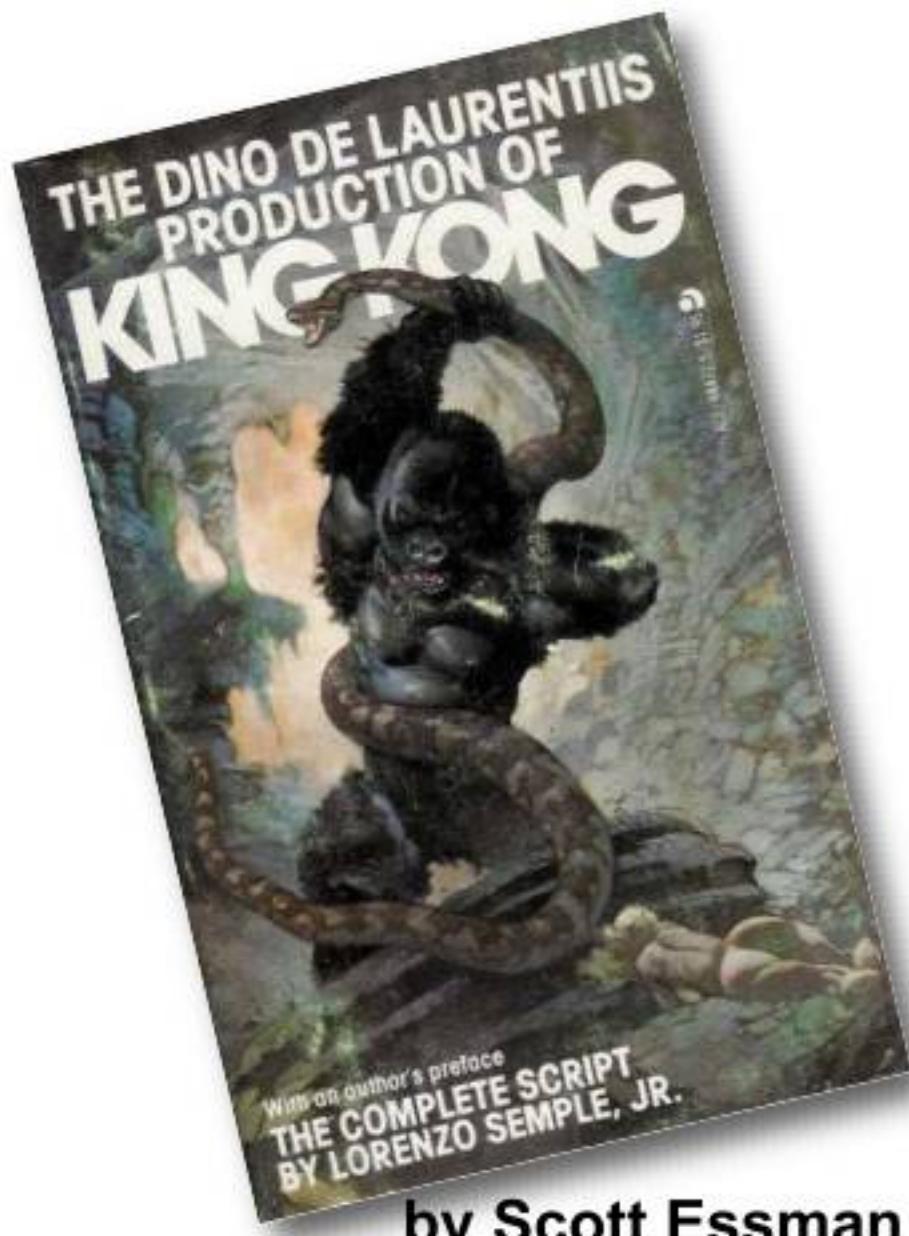
After just six years, DEG was forced to close its doors in 1989, despite having modest success with films like "Year of the Dragon" (1985), "Blue Velvet" (1986), and the "Conan" series. However, it did little to stop Dino's movie-making machine and by the late nineties he was back on form again. Between 2001 and 2007, he produced all three sequels to the "Silence of the Lambs," including Ridley Scott's blockbuster, "Hannibal" (2001).

Unfortunately the shadow caught up with Dino once more with two consecutive flops, "The Last Legion" and "Virgin Territory" (both 2007), and four unrealized projects that would forever remain in development hell. On November 10th, 2010, after a break from producing, he passed away peacefully in the company of his close friends and family at his Beverly Hills home. He was ninety one.

His life had him build four movie studios, including Screen Gems Studios. He won the Irving G. Thalberg Memorial Award for his outstanding contribution to filmmaking. With over six hundred pictures under his belt and a career spanning seven decades, Dino De Laurentiis remains one of the most prolific producers to have ever worked in the business.

CULT FILMS FROM DINO DE LAURENTIIS





by Scott Essman

When he got the call to re-write the 1933 classic, King Kong, Lorenzo Semple, Jr. had already scored several screenwriting triumphs with early 1970s artistic successes such as Papillon, The Parallax View, and Three Days of the Condor. Within the science fiction, fantasy, and horror genre, he had been known as a writer of some 16 episodes of the Batman TV series and movie from 1966. Strategically, Semple, Jr. updated Kong's screen-

play to embellish it with 1970s U.S. culture while retaining key elements of the 1933 script. For one, instead of main character Carl Denham leading a 1930s expedition to make a film of the King Kong legend, Semple's oil-crisis-period treatment has the Denham surrogate Jack Wilson of the Petrox oil company exploring Kong's native Skull Island for untapped oil reserves.

When the "black gold" on the island tests too chemically immature to serve as a usable source of petroleum, Semple, Jr. writes Wilson as a tycoon-style profiteer. Instead of bringing back oil, he'll bring back Kong, the ultimate mascot in an era of bigger and bolder salesmanship. Of course, this plan backfires similarly to the way it backfired for Denham, with Kong and nature breaking free of technology and society in both movies. Another new addition to Semple, Jr.'s turn at the story finds Jack Prescott's intellectual ecologist hero in place of Jack Driscoll's rugged sailor. Where in 1933 Driscoll was strictly in service of saving heroine Ann Darrow, Prescott in 1976 cares equally for Kong as he does for heroine Dwan. Perhaps the most marked difference in characterization

from each film occurs in one simple but effective scene between Kong and Dwan. With the ape angered at her escape attempts and opening his mouth as if to eat the woman, an empowered Dwan throws a fit, hitting the ape and calling him a "male chauvinist." After she further angers the dumfounded gorilla, Dwan then tries to comfort the beast, throwing 1970s singles bar lines at him such as "what's your sign?" It is a moment that both transforms the film for then-modern audiences and provides it with a necessarily humorous interlude.

More good timing than clever writing, Semple, Jr. also placed his climactic battle atop the brand new World Trade Center, dedicated in 1974, in lieu of the Empire State Building, which in parallel had been completed in 1930. In a technological upgrade, Semple Jr. had Kong's attackers in military helicopters — ironically or not, fresh after the Vietnam War — in place of the World War I-style biplanes that knocked Kong down in 1933. Semple, Jr. followed Kong with Hurricane and Flash Gordon for Kong producer Dino de Laurentiis before trailing off to less exciting 1980s and 1990s fare.

TIME MAGAZINE gets on the gravy train

by John Michlig

How big was Dino De Laurentiis's KING KONG? Big enough for the October 25th, 1976 issue of venerable *Time* magazine to feature Jessica Lange on the cover and a virtual KING KONG promotional feature inside.

Incidentally, the article's opening photo montage includes a four-photo series of Lange in Kong's hand culminating—inexplicably—in a full-blown, breast-baring "wardrobe malfunction" more explicit than anything in the film. The photos were set-up and taken especially for *Time* by their own photographer.

Here are some of the more interesting passages from the seven-page cover story, which hit newsstands well before KING KONG was released.

- Note the careful wording of an opening page editor's note that described the difficulty in getting an interview with "Gorilla-mime Rick Baker, who stood in for the 40-ft. 'audioanimatronic' Kong in scenes that were shot in miniature." Just those few scenes where the robot could not be used, right?
- After a gee-whiz description of the "3,100 ft. of hydraulic hose and 4,500 ft. of electrical wiring" inside robo-Kong, the article goes on to state (with a straight face) that "it is impossible to tell in the finished product where [robo-Kong's] work ends and that of the more mobile and manageable representations of Kong take over."
- There's a macabre bit of foreshadowing in a passage describing Kong's assault on the World Trade Center: "That final destructive binge could be seen—and lines in the script lightly suggest it—as a projection of Western fears of what might happen if the Third World should develop its potential power and strike back."
- And finally, here is, word for word, a classic De Laurentiis quote as printed by *Time* magazine: "No one cry when Jaws die," Dino says, his voice rising in passion as he develops his theme. "But when the monkey die, people gonna cry. Intellectuals gonna love Konk; even film buffs who love the first Konk gonna love ours. Why? Because I no give them crap. I no spend two, three million to do quick business. I spend 24 million on my Konk. I give them quality. I got here a great love story, a great adventure. And she rated PG. For everybody."



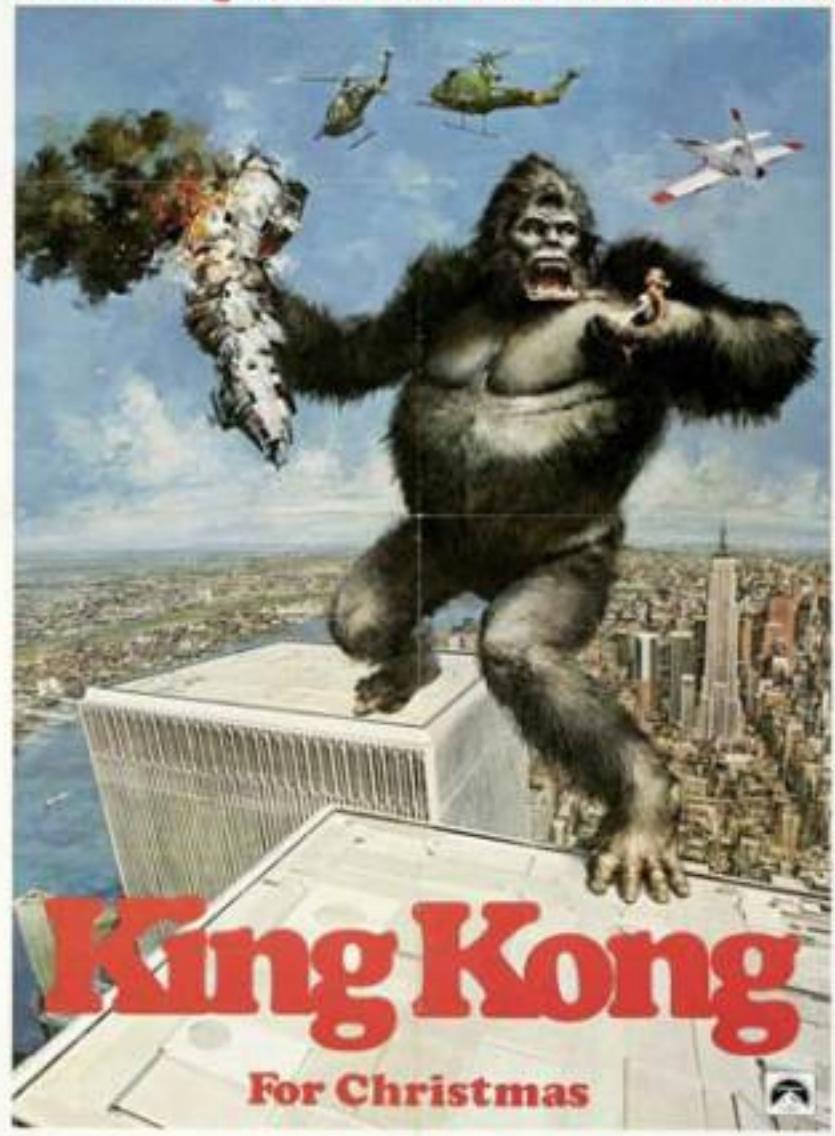
GORILLA MARKETING

Masks. Stuffed animals. Playing cards. Lunch boxes. Jammies.

After the release of Kong '76, the image of the chest pounding gorilla was inescapable. Just like nearly every American could point out a member of KISS, and would later be able to identify helmet of Darth Vader, Kong rose to the top of pop culture as an iconic image and recognizable figure. The marketing and cash-in of Kong-related products ran from the inspired to the insipid, but one thing's for sure: if you were a child of the 70s, you probably owned at least one.



The most exciting original motion picture event of all time.



JOHN BERKEY POSTER BOY

by Brett Dunford



The poster for a movie can often make the biggest lasting impression. From Rhett and Scarlett in each other's arms to Father Merrin standing outside the MacNeil house, the poster becomes one of the chief representatives of the piece itself. For the 1976 remake of King Kong, Minnesota freelance artist John Berkey was commissioned to paint scenes for various releases and merchandise.

A prolific name in the science fiction/fantasy genre, Berkey painted the impressive image of the ape roaring defiantly on the Twin Towers. While bearing little resemblance to the scene on film, it still remains a widely-respected piece of art. "They wanted an aircraft in one hand, with Kong

straddling the two towers," Berkey said in an interview. "That was about all I was told. I was given no guidance on the ape – just do an ape, basically."

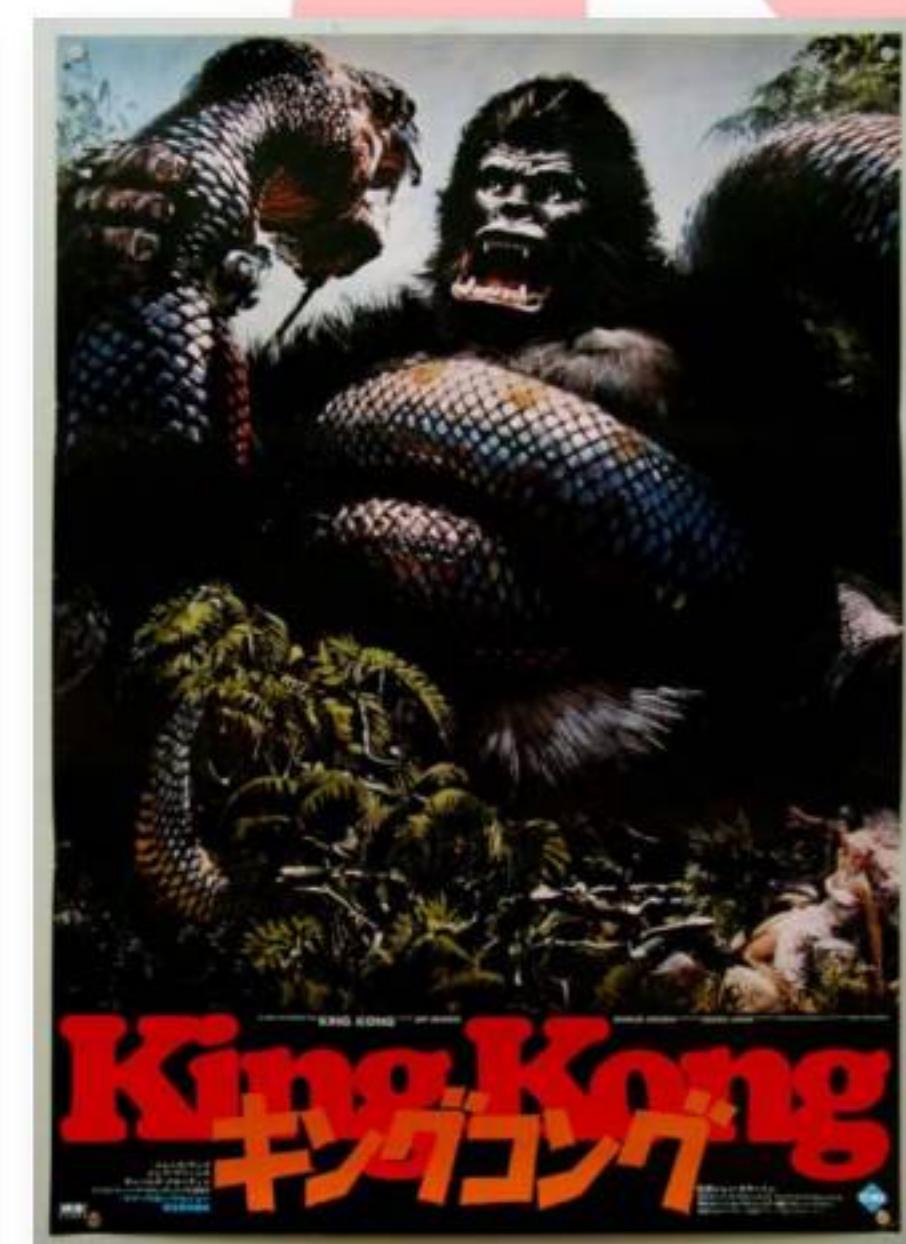
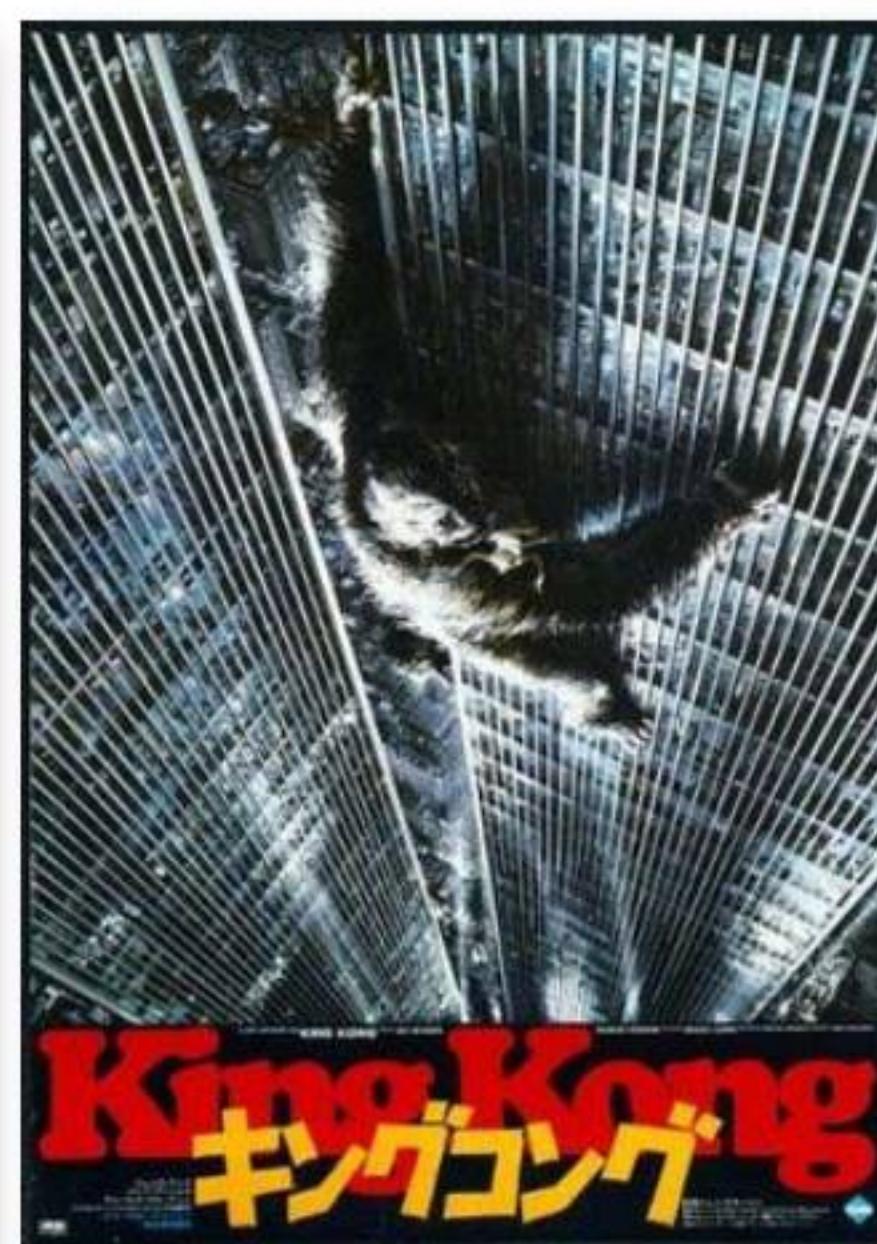
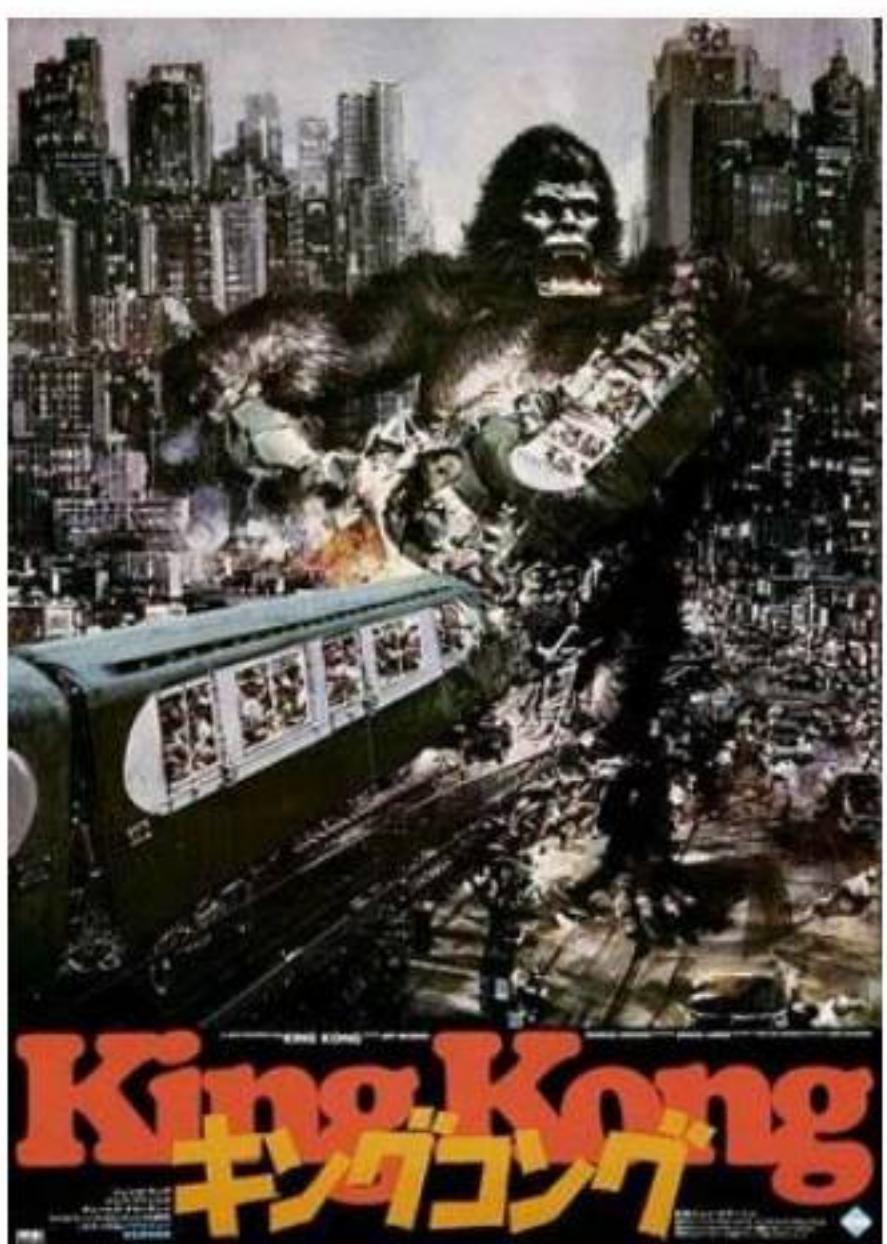
After the poster was unveiled in November 1975, it underwent numerous changes until release.

The Canadian Air Force took issue with the use of their name stenciled on the side of a wrecked plane in Kong's right hand, so the entire vehicle was painted over to look like an explosion.

Berkey painted other scenes from the film, including the Manhattan disaster sequence and the snake fight, among others.

The familiarity of his work in the industry led to bigger and better things, when Berkey was commissioned to provide art for the original Star Wars trilogy. In 2008, he died of heart failure aged seventy-five. Many pieces from his collection are frequently displayed at ArtOrg exhibitions in Northfield, Minnesota.

People like John Berkey are the true unsung heroes of the film industry. Who have the artistic skill to sculpt art that encompasses the themes and devices of a motion picture, and then apply it to one promotional image that has the potential to define it, and keep the money rolling in long after release with book and poster sales.



ONE OF US...

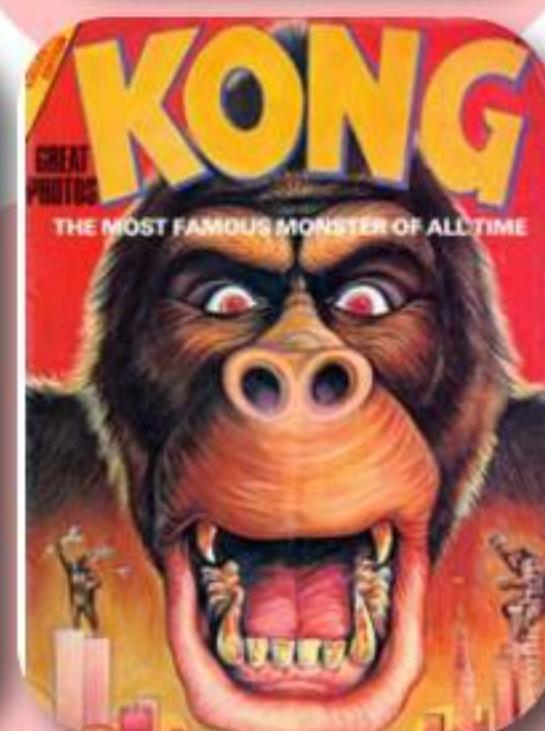
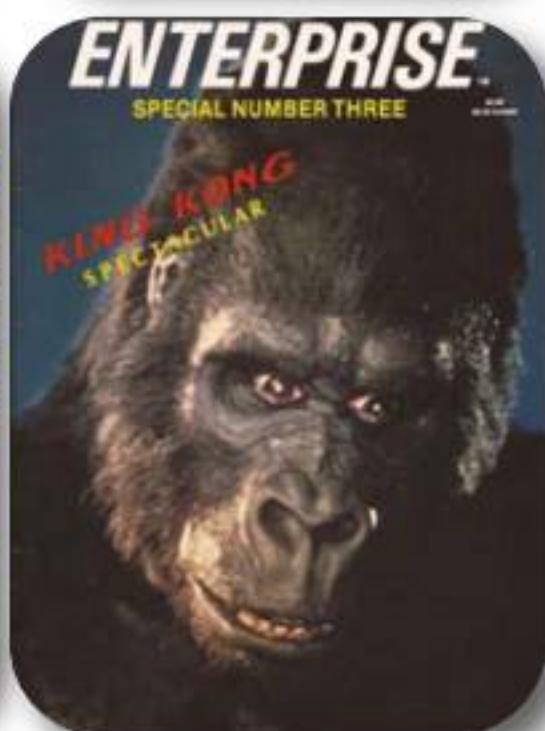
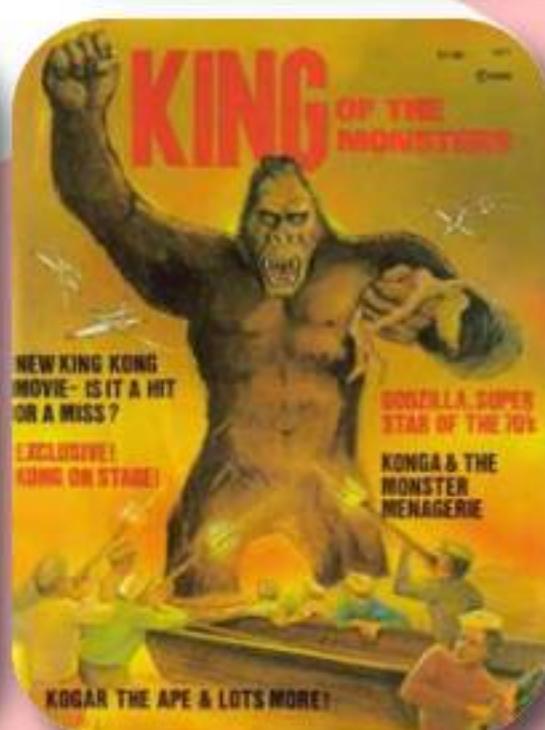
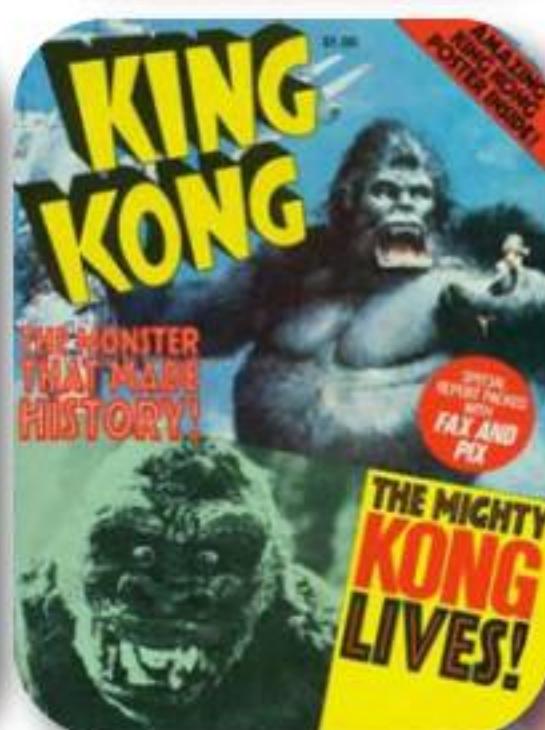
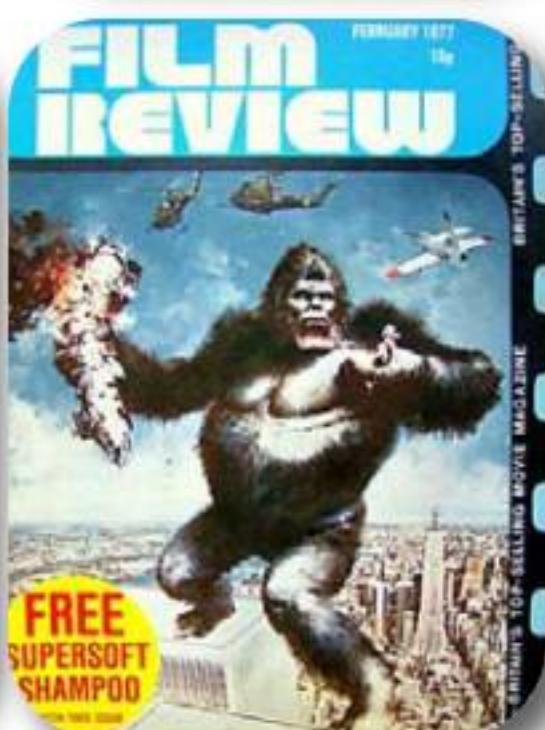
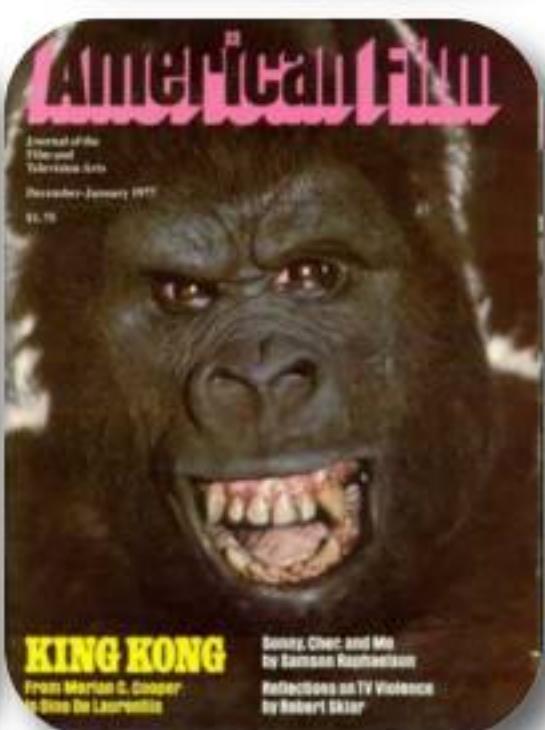
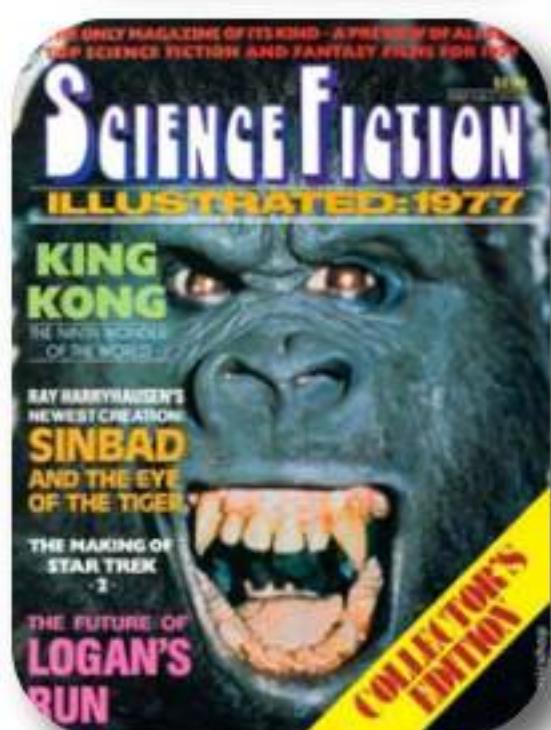
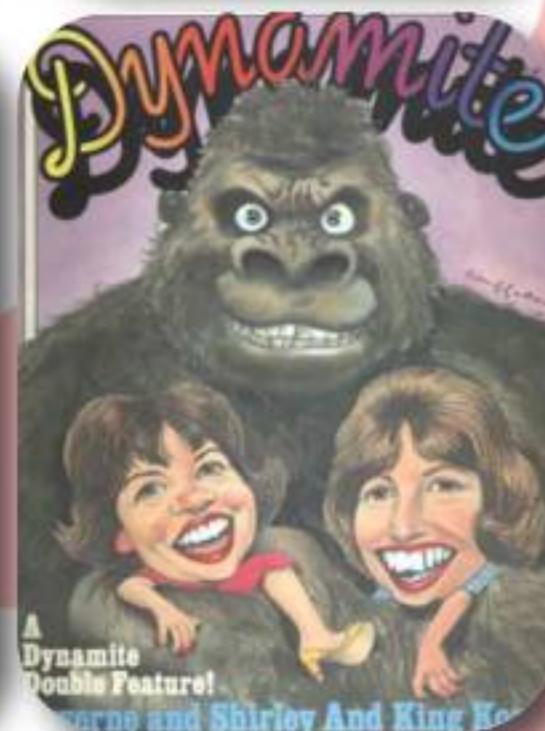
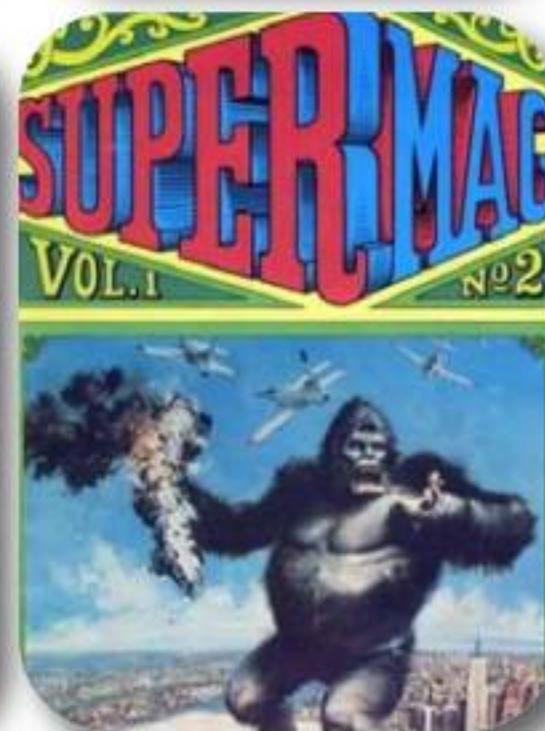
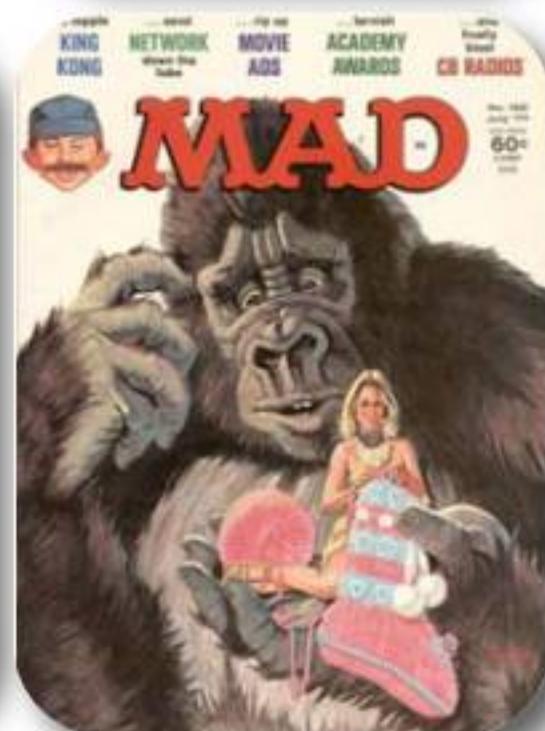
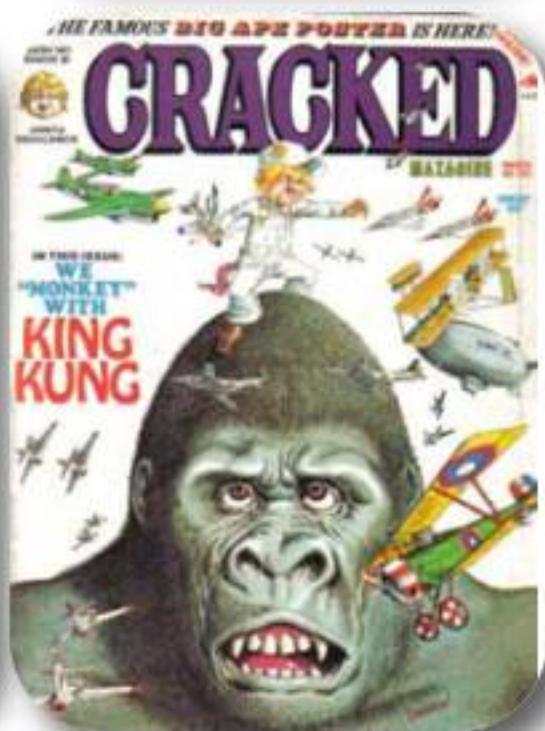
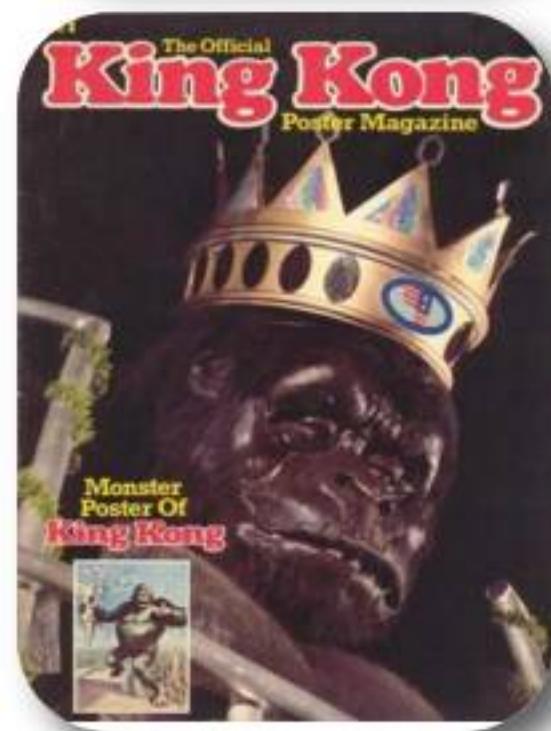
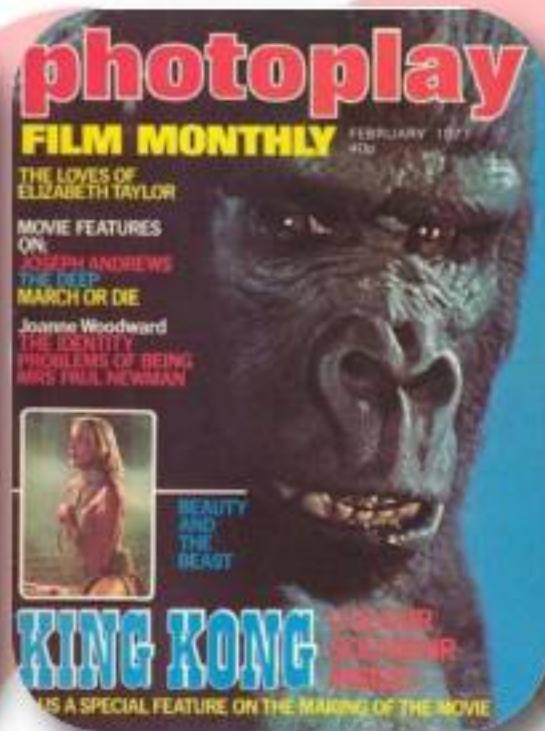
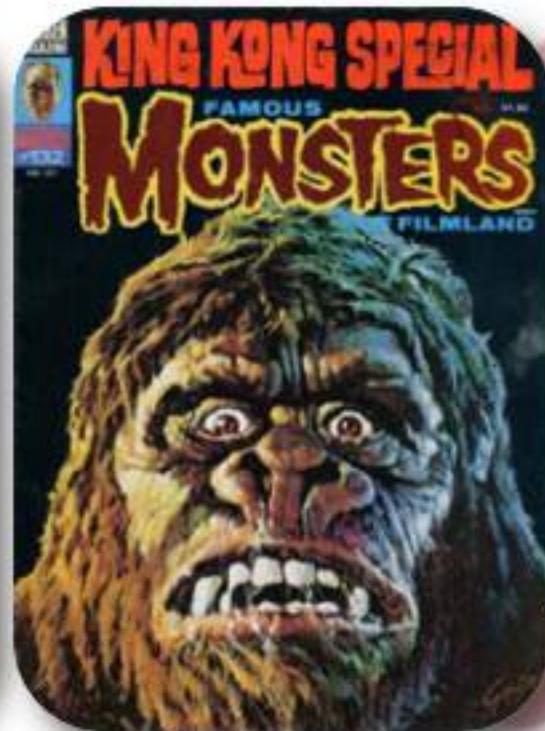
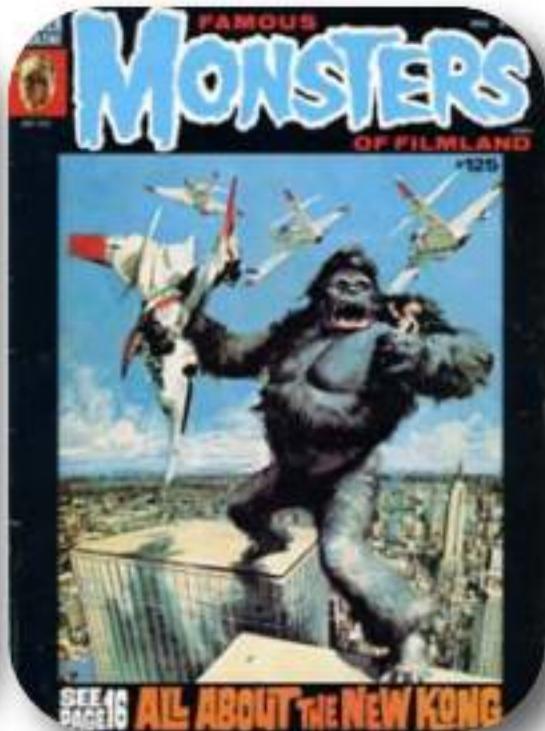
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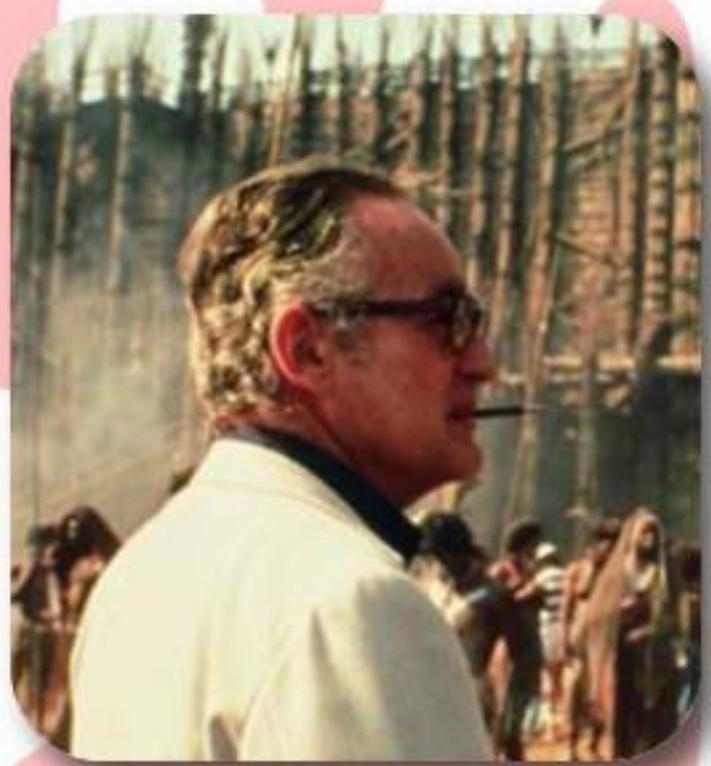
“
The
King
Is
Dead...
Long
Live
The
King!”

“The King Is Dead...
Long Live The King!”

THE SOULS BEHIND THE SPIRIT THE PEOPLE OF **KONG**



The Producer



Dino De Laurentiis

The Director



John Guillerman

The Robot



Carlo Rambaldi

The Saviour



Rick Baker

Jack



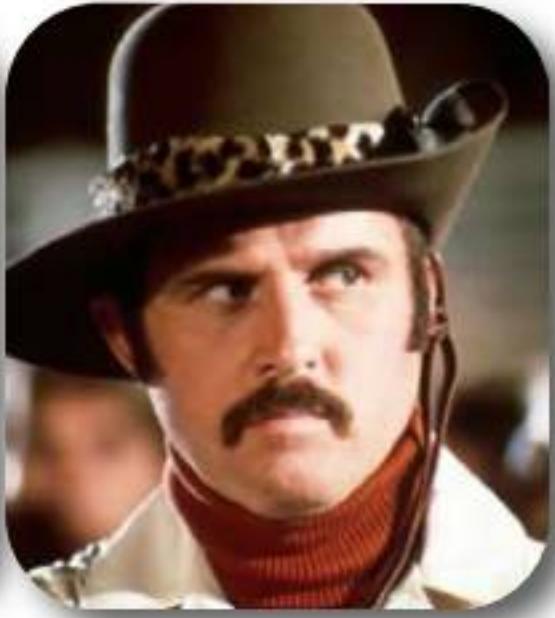
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Dwan



Jessica Lange

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